UPDATED EDITION WITH THE LATEST RESEARCH
AND THE AUTHOR'S DRAMATIC FRESH FINDS

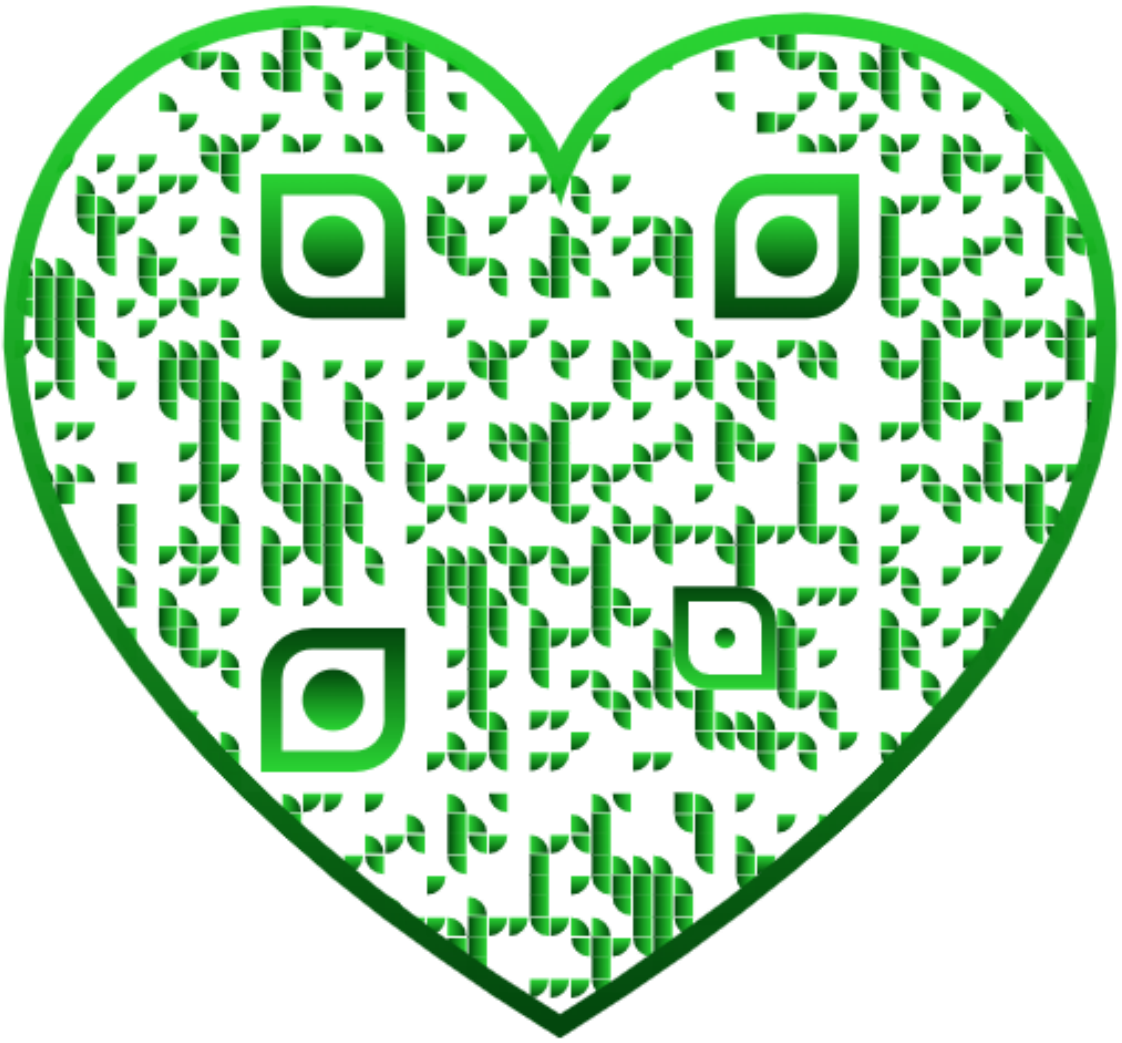
# WHERE BIGFOOT WALKS

## CROSSING THE DARK DIVIDE

ROBERT MICHAEL PYLE

"*Where Bigfoot Walks* is so haunting and beautiful and bold that I can think of nothing else like it."

–MOLLY GLOSS, author of *Falling from Horses*, *The Jump-Off Creek*, *The Hearts of Horses*, and *Wild Life*



# WHERE BIGFOOT WALKS

Crossing the Dark Divide

ROBERT MICHAEL PYLE

COUNTERPOINT
Berkeley, California

# Contents


Introduction: Bukwus and Dzonoqua at Play

I – PAN'S BRIDGE

1 • Not Looking for Bigfoot

2 • Juniper Ridge

3 • Ghost Moths at Moonrise

4 • Sunrise with Bears

5 • The Saddle

II–HEART OF THE DARK DIVIDE

6 • Of Ouzels and Old Growth

7 • Monty West and the Well-Adapted Ape

8 • Legends of the Dark Divide

9 • Yellowjacket Pass

10 • Grendel Redux: Snagtooth

III–DEVILS IN HEAVEN

11 • Whistling with Bigfoot

12 • "Bigfoot Baby Found in Watermelon, Has Elvis's Sneer"

13 • One Hundred Hours of Solitude

14 • Natural History of the Bigfoot Hunters

15 • Back to Earth

IV–FOOTSTEPS ON THE WIND

16 • Northern Spotted Bigfoot

17 • Lost in the Big Lava Bed

18 • Mermaids, Monsters, and Metaphors

19 • Carson on the Columbia

20 • Something in the Night

Epilogue: Monsters in the Mist

Back to the Dark Divide: 2017

Map of the Dark Divide

Appendix: A Protocol for Encounter

References

Acknowledgments

About the Author

*A giant has swallowed the earth,*
*And when he sleeps now, oh when he sleeps,*
*How his eyelids murmur, how we envy his dream.*

—Pattiann Rogers, *Firekeeper*

# I

# PAN'S BRIDGE

# II

# HEART OF THE DARK DIVIDE

# 7

# Monty West and the Well-Adapted Ape

*In this respect man resembles those forms, called by naturalists protean . . . having thus escaped the action of natural selection.*

—Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*

When I decided to include a car in my travel plans, I realized that I would have to devote a certain amount of time and resources to keeping it on the road. My venerable Honda, Powdermilk, had never given me trouble in remote places, and I had faith. It was rewarded: the worst that befell me was a weak battery when I left Quartz Creek. On hills, with the little 1,300-cc engine, I've been accused of having hamsters under the hood. This time, when I checked the battery I found a rodent under the hood all right—a pregnant mouse stuck in a hole in the frame. The hole was half an inch in diameter, but her broad belly was at least an inch across. She'd gotten her big-eared head, forelegs, and chest through the hole and then became stuck. I'd found evidence in the auto of her nibbling before, but what was the attraction of a hole with nothing on the other side? Whatever her plans were, they'd gang all to hell agley.

I thought she was dead. Checking, I found her not only alive but as agitated as you might be under the circumstances. I tugged her by the nape as gently as I could, unable to imagine her belly and pelvic girdle fitting through the perforation in the metal flange. Weakened from the struggle (all night long?), she squeaked but did not resist. Eventually I got her through with no obvious damage. Her hindquarters were wet and numb. I placed her, all sleekit and cow'rin', on a stump with cheese and crackers, and she came around. Soon, fully restored, the mouse scampered into the woods, and I coasted to a start down the hill.

I thought about this odd but minor incident, which interested me for several reasons, as I cruised the Lewis River road. First, I was struck by how quickly my attitude toward mice could change. I've always loved mice, but at home we trap them because of their fondness for crapping in the stove, the dishes, and the food, for making nests in the kitchen linens, and for nibbling wires. With the spread of the deadly hantaviruses, the reasons are more than aesthetic ones. Yet the same creature I would have trapped at home I here had struggled with great

care to release from a trap inadvertently set. How relative are our attitudes toward animals!

Second, this was a deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), the same as our home mice—arguably the most numerous and successful mammal in North America. One way to define something you're not sure about is to define what it is not; in their numbers and range, you could say that deer mice are the opposite of what we imagine Bigfoot to be. Even if this individual was showing no great talent for survival, on the whole her species has fancy-danced so well to natural selection's jig that it is the last candidate for endangerment on anyone's list. Deer mice are also the quintessential generalists, betting their adaptive marbles on reproductivity rather than on specialized gadgets or behavior. Any habitat will do, from hemlocks to houses to Hondas. Not total camp followers like house mice, they do prefer the north-temperate wooded locales; our own habitats are just one option.

Third, I was reminded that deer mice are part of the likely answer to everyone's biggest question about Bigfoot's existence: why don't we ever find a body? In fact we don't often find the bodies of any big animals, because bears, coyotes, and ravens strip and scatter the bones, and deer mice recycle the calcium in the bones in no time. So these little rodents help us quantify the traits of a large, rare specialist; point out the slippery slope of our own animal ethics; and tidy up the landscape of Bigfoot bones and other litter. That fortunate, wee and tim'rous beastie stuck with me.

——

I stopped at the North Wood Store at Eagle Cliff to try for distilled water, which they did have. As I paid and went out to refresh my battery, a parade of costumed men alighted from large trucks and came into the store. They were dressed in camouflage jumpsuits, and their faces were painted black in stripes and blotches. New trucks, big men, my age—Vietnam Rangers holding a reunion, or perhaps survivalist gun nuts? I shut my hood as they filed out of the store bearing candy bars and jerky sticks. "Let's do it," barked the leader, and they pulled out with a roar and much agitation of gravel. An impressive display of macho so early in the morning.

I spoke with Kevin Landacre, the proprietor of the North Wood Store and Eagle Cliff Cabins for the past eight years. Dressed in jeans and a green alligator

shirt, Kevin was balding, with a brown fringe of hair and a short beard, and relaxed. Single, he obviously enjoyed talking at length with folks in the store. Some things still had him buffaloed, though, as when a kid rolled up on a bike and said, “Uh, Kevin, somehow the toilet’s got overfloating.” He told me it was hard to make it with the downturn in logging caused by overcutting on the south side of the Lewis Reservoir, as well as by federal timber withdrawals for spotted owl protection. Even so, he felt that the remaining lowland old growth should be saved—a rare outlook among timberland merchants. It was clear that the forest meant more to Landacre than making a living, as vital as that was.

I asked whether he’d heard any reports of Bigfoot sightings. “Not myself,” he said. “But I’m open-minded about it . . . I’d love to see one.” He said there had been wolf and wolverine sightings in the area, contrary to the beliefs of local mammalogists, and that a wolverine had been found as a roadkill by the Wind River maintenance crew two or three years before. So, he implied, why should we rule out Bigfoot? I agreed that seeing a wolf or wolverine, long thought to be gone from southern Cascadia, might be even rarer than spotting a mere Sasquatch.

Before I left, Kevin told me that the guys in camouflage were bow-hunters. I had heard that some Bigfoot hunters from Vancouver, Washington, pursued their quarry with large trucks, camo, and big guns. I was relieved to hear that these men were merely out to skewer grouse and deer. Kevin excused himself to give careful directions and suggestions to a woman in a rental car who was eager to see Mount St. Helens but was scared of being in “wilderness.” That reminded me I had places to go. “Let’s do it,” I said to no one in particular and pulled out, with only a weak murmur from my charging battery.

I wanted to see something of the much-remarked Clear Creek corridor, the longest uncut stand of Douglas fir in southwest Washington. I headed up Clear Creek as far as the road went, then turned onto Spencer Meadows Road and on up into the mist. The day was cloudy, cool, and damp. Scraps of old growth dripped with sodden traceries of short, wispy lichens, like moldy green tinsel. The paved one-lane road had not been built for people to view the Pacific yews, gleaming red in the rain; it was the result of years of fat Forest Service road-building budgets. As I climbed through a patchwork of clear-cuts, I viewed the raison d’être. Unlike the Willapa Hills, my home ground, here the clear-cuts were relatively small and not all contiguous. This showed the attempted restraint of the Forest Service compared to the private companies who hold total sway in my backyard. Some snags had been left, and some of the cutting was selective.

This was not forestry at its worst, but I doubted it was the worst I would see.

The only car I'd seen for miles was parked at the Spencer Butte trailhead. An oldie, its bumper stickers read TEST PEACE—NOT NUCLEAR WEAPONS and THIS IS NOT AN ABANDONED CAR. It did not belong to the archers. Having heard of parked cars bashed for their owners' views as expressed on bumper stickers, I had never adorned mine. When the road rose at last into lodgepole pines, a golden-mantled ground squirrel expressed loud opinions that probably weren't far from my own.

Lichen-swaddled noble firs stood by the Cussed Hollow Trail. Clear-cuts and young plantations of noble fir followed. Light rain fell from a cold gray sky whose dull light slowly strobed as I passed from mountain hemlock and noble fir to clear-cut and back again. At Spencer Meadows the pavement ended. I struck left toward the headwaters of Clear Creek. Now came the steep-slope clear-cuts, bleeding with erosion. This was just about as bad as Willapa, the difference being that trees had been left standing between the scars. The sense of fragmentation became acute, with vistas of ancient-forested mountainsides on the west side of Clear Creek facing slashed and burned foreground on the east. The road ended in the devastation of a partly burned clear-cut with intact forests on all sides.

I parked the car near the headwaters of Clear Creek, below Shark Rock, in the western reaches of the Dark Divide. The rush of water behind me, the soft drip from the trees, ravens gronking far off—these were the only sounds I heard. Driving up, I'd been listening to a tape of natural sounds from the temperate rain forest sent by my friend Gordon Hempton. Known as the Sound Tracker, the Emmy-winning Hempton has rambled the world in search of settings devoid of noise pollution where he could record the native sounds. At just this moment—no saws, no safety horns from a logging job, no engines or airplanes or voices—I felt I was in the middle of Hempy's tape. I recognized the rarity of the moment and enjoyed it for all it was worth.

A strange kind of amphibian, the tailed frog, occupies high, cold streams in the Pacific Northwest—except where the land has been so denuded that the streams silt up and rise in temperature. The tadpoles have suckerlike mouths for holding on to rocks, and the adult male has a cloacal tail to facilitate mating in fast currents. The tailed frog's nearest relatives, the leiopelmids, live in New Zealand—a much greater biogeographical leap than that represented by a great ape in the New World.

I'd never found the tailed frog and decided to investigate this high tributary of

Clear Creek. Into the afternoon I searched the steep little stream, climbing among the stones and chill cascades. Large trees had been felled across the creek from one side, blown down from the inadequate buffer strip on the other. For the cut to follow the creek, more or less, seemed unusual. Nowadays large woody debris is sometimes left in the water for riparian structure to benefit salmon, but this was just the random result of the cut line.

I found no tailed frogs, though I had an unusually good look. Crossing a log, I fell face-first into a pool from a little height when the rotting wood gave way. I continued my search for a while, probing the habitat on the frog's own level. But soaked and pretty cold, I had to get out and dry off. I went back to the car, stripped, toweled, and was about to don dry clothes and leave when a different impulse took over. The rain had stopped, and the air temperature was in the fifties, comfortable enough for a denizen of the coastal rain forest such as I.

Nude, I walked a little way and climbed a stump. In the dropping light and leaden cool, I regarded the woods around me in a complete circle, peering into mists in the crowns of firs and into the deepest recesses of the forest. I wondered if my naked, furless, puny body was being watched and remarked with wonder. And that's when I remembered Monty West.

West was a professor of anthropology at the University of Washington when I was a student there in the late sixties and early seventies. While many of the faculty reeled before the rising counterculture, Monty West embraced, even defined it. If his colleagues were intimidated, confused, or repelled by the coming wave, Monty West rode its crest. But he was no poseur. Naturally antiestablishment, Monty West did not have to affect hipness; his time had simply come.

Curious about this respected academician, who shared many of the values I assumed my generation possessed, I enrolled in a course of his on world folklore, imagining a pleasant romp among trolls and tales. But I quickly dropped it: I'd never encountered a reading list as intimidating or a syllabus as rigorous as his. So I never really got to know West, but I tuned in to the folklore surrounding him. Recently I tried to track him down, but he was nowhere to be found. Historian and photographer Paul Dorpat, a contemporary of mine at the University of Washington, lived near West in the Seattle neighborhood of Wallingford for years and used to see him frequently. Once Monty showed Dorpat a cave he had dug beneath a cherry tree in his backyard.

"I took a magnificent picture of him," Dorpat told me. "Wild, flying hair, still lean and athletic." Monty said he was going to live in the hole or else head up to

Whidbey or San Juan Island, where he had “a place to go.” A little later Dorpat saw him, for the last time, riding a bicycle, his famous Land Rover long gone (West said its mileage was always in proportion to the price of gas).

The story that came to mind on my solitary stump was his most famous adventure: Monty West’s month-long sojourn in the wild Gifford Pinchot—in the nude. Sometime in the autumn of 1970, the story goes, West was dropped off at the edge of the wilderness. His plan was to enter the wilds entirely unequipped—no matches, sleeping bag, food, clothing, or other gear—and to live that way for a month. The point was to experience a state of mind like that of an aboriginal human being, defenseless against the wilderness. With no particular skills of woodcraft, he wanted to see whether he could survive, stay reasonably warm and nourished, and come back to tell about it. His particular desire, as an anthropologist, was to feel what primitive people everywhere must have felt as they confronted the world on its own terms.

The version I heard first, from one of West’s acolytes, had him curling at night around a tiny fire made by friction. That part is not too different from what John Muir did in the Sierra, though he wore clothes. West supposedly ate wild foods, lost weight (he was already a beanpole), and survived. Eventually he came out—wild, hairy, and naked—to a forest road, where he waved down the first car he saw.

By this account the driver stopped, picked him up, took him to a rendezvous, and never mentioned his unclad state.

Now, as I stood shivering on the stump, I thought of Monty, skinny and cold and hungry and scratched up, trying to cover ground barefoot while keeping his energy up and his fear down. When I fell into that frigid creek, I was wearing boots and was close to warmth, dryness, shelter, and food. Even if I had been injured, I probably could have made it out; my car would have tipped off a logger, hunter, or hiker before too long. We have to work pretty hard to put ourselves in real jeopardy out in the roaded forest, free climbers and gonzo archers excepted. But unless I caught an arrow in the ass from some wannabe Robin Hood who mistook it for an elk’s rump, I was at little risk. I could fall in the creek with impunity and come out laughing.

Now imagine the same scene with me nude (you can skip the details) and unshod, with no towel, heater, woollies, or food cache around the corner. Night coming, temperature dropping, in tangled and sharp-edged country. Maybe a broken bone or a bad sprain. I had a lot more insulation and stored calories than West, and those advantages might have gotten me through a few days. But

humans under stress and out in the cold are notoriously susceptible to hypothermia. Essentially, if I'd been in West's situation and had fallen into a mountain stream at dusk in the autumn at high elevation, I might have been done for.

That modest adventure gave me pause. For just a moment I sensed the fragility of the body against the hard, hard land. And I realized that if Monty West did go into the woods and return, he was a lucky man. Most of us would not be very good at such an undertaking. If we didn't starve, freeze, or freak out, we would probably succumb to blood poisoning, tetanus, or sheer fear. If we didn't give up and come out within a few days, we probably wouldn't come out at all. Long, long ago we lost our adaptability. As the naked ape, we sold our ability to live unfettered in order to buy civilization. Hence the age-old fear of (and repugnance for) the wilderness. People who still know how to live well there don't hate the wilderness, but there are few such people left.

Those we used to call primitives, or aboriginals, knew how to derive sustenance, shelter, and security from their surrounds. It was no rare skill—everyone had it or died. But it was a great skill, and when it passed, something of eternal value was lost. Now when we go into the wilderness, as I did from time to time in the Dark Divide, we go armored in ripstop nylon and Gore-Tex, shod with Vibram soles that shield our tender feet from the very earth. We go with matches, freeze-dried food, gas stoves, water purifiers, and all manner of comforts. We follow well-traveled trails, which we reach in motor vehicles. Some even take to the trails with motors, shattering any last pretense of wilderness encounter for themselves and everyone within earshot.

And then there is Bigfoot, if there is Bigfoot. Like the American Indians or any other native people, it travels well among the rocks and trees with no thought of escape or salvation: what it knows is the world as it is. Even native people take skins from other creatures to protect themselves from cold and abrasion, make fires to cook with, and build shelters from the elements. Sasquatch does none of these things. Maybe that is one reason Indians regard Sasquatch with fear and suspicion as wild men even more self-reliant than themselves.

A little way down the road I had noticed substantial rock-cleft caves in the stony slopes above the clear-cut. Perhaps Bigfoot makes use of natural shelters such as these. Many stories tell of finding moss-and-lichen beds fashioned like those made by great apes. Only one or two reports mention deerskin capes or other adornment. Essentially, if we have a beast here at all, we have one whose

needs are met entirely by its wits and its muscle in concert with its habitat.

If Bigfoot falls into a stream, it's no big deal. If it breaks a leg, maybe it lives, maybe it doesn't—several of the best-known tracks show signs of a healed injury. Do parasites and disease enter the life of Bukwus? Does Dzonoqua get hungry when wild foods are scarce? If this is a mortal animal, these conditions must apply. And yet here is an ape that reportedly covers ground (even nearly vertical ground) at a rapid rate, that negotiates all kinds of rugged countryside, that shirks no sort of weather. Only one set of conditions seems to deter Bigfoot from living vigorously and well in the wild, the same ones that took away our ability to do so: human civilization.

It would be a hollow indictment that failed to recognize the astonishing adaptations represented by that same civilization. The most churlish Luddite could not help but marvel at the densely acronymic toy shop that defines our comfort, ease, and entertainment: TV, VCR, PC, ROM, MTV, CNN, V8, 747, DVD, CMG, et cetera. Technology has lifted our Western lives so far from the nettles and the mire that we cannot imagine going back. To the extent that these tools enhance life and reduce mortality, they could be called adaptive.

Yet another set of initials expresses the downside of modern life: IRS, FBI, CIA, HIV, AA, CFS, PCB, PMS, STD, ICBM, et cetera. Of course, not all of these baleful conditions have arisen directly from technology. Our numbers, our mobility, and the stresses peculiar to our age certainly exacerbate their effects. I don't know if anyone would give up the first set of initials to get rid of the second. It's too late, anyway: as a species, we are fully wedded to our electronic assistance. There is no going back to the woods—unless under population pressure or disease and strife or environmental change, our systems collapse under us, thrusting us into the primitive condition once again. If that were to occur, I wouldn't give a lot for most folks' chances, minus their microwaves.

The high concepts now are "interactive media" and "virtual experience." I, like others, look upon such amazing ideas with awe. What can be bad about instant communication around the globe, easy access to all the information in the world, and helmets that take the place of Yosemite or Yokohama?

Still I wonder. Take the chips away, and what have you got? When function depends upon form, and form is far removed from common experience, function ceases to be common—and surely shared experience is one field mark of civilization. It's hard to say how many people will ever participate in the upper strata of technology. But one thing is sure: as the number grows, so does our separation from the physical world. Smartphones may be interactive, but what

they interact with is not the land; in virtual reality, virtual means exactly that—it ain't real. We see only what we need to see. When our needs are completely met by pixels on a screen, we will cease to be interactive with the world. When virtual reality does the job, who needs the real thing? And who will know what to do when the real thing appears?

Desmond Morris notwithstanding, we are not the naked ape. We're seldom naked, and when we are, we are even more defenseless than usual. Bigfoot is the naked ape—clothed with hair but naked the way Monty West was naked: equipped with nothing but his own resources in the face of nature—"naked against the rain," as Richard Rubin elegantly put it in his book by that name. I don't know how Monty's experiment came out. He seems to have dropped out of sight in recent years. Whether he achieved the state of mind of an aborigine is a matter of sheer conjecture. Even if he experienced the early human's terror before the universe, I doubt that he felt the sense of mastery and confidence that must mark the competent native everywhere. But he interacted as few of us ever will; there was nothing virtual about his adventure.

Naked on my stump, I felt the flimsiness of our security in contrast to any wild animal's perfect fitness to its situation. And I understood a truth that had been tracking me ever since I'd set foot in the Dark Divide—that Bigfoot is the better beast. When Bigfoot enthusiasts gather, they debate whether the subject of their attention is a "primitive" hominid or not. In fact, insofar as it is powerfully fit for life in the world in a way that few humans today can even imagine, I would say that Sasquatch represents the advanced condition, that of the superior ape.

——

The black remains of burned logs lined the way as I drove away from Clear Creek through a cut called Backside. The timber sales, also called payment units —a frank phrase for what a forest comes down to in the end—are all named. The names exercise the imaginations, and sometimes the irony, of the Gifford Pinchot planners. I remember one called *glabella*, the species name of the yellow violet that was probably common there prior to the cut. "Backside" seemed appropriate, for I felt I was indeed traveling the ass-end of the world as I descended through the clear-cut into a mist like mountain-goat fur. A moss cushion as thick as a good comforter, incredibly soft and plush to the touch, lined a rivulet by the road. I felt I could fall into it and never come out.

Down at Craggy Trail I passed a stolid bunch of archers in semipermanent plastic camps, sitting around rotting in the rain. Careful—your greasepaint will run! It's a sure thing they wouldn't last long naked, bows or no. They paid me no heed. I rolled across a montage of different-aged cuts to where the pavement began. The light faded into a foggy, pearly dusk. At a place where erosion below the road had torn out the underpinnings of a clear-cut, some sort of yellow foam had been sprayed to hold the slope. Nothing grew there. Beargrass and bracken poked russet among the blue nobles on gentler slopes, where the soil had stayed. Logging leaves a litter-storm of tapes, tags, ribbons, and paint stripes across the countryside. But the soft scarlets of vine maples, huckleberries, and the eye of a towhee outshone all the harsh reds of the ribbons.

Dropping through the fog above Quartz Creek, I came once again to the place of the mouse. Assuming she had indeed recovered fully, I doubted that she'd traveled fifty yards that day. I'd gone well over fifty miles, yet I wondered which of us had learned more. I hoped that the mouse had learned to keep her twitchy nose out of small holes, though I knew she'd probably do it all over again. As for me, I'd learned (as Whitman said in "Song of Myself") that "a mouse is miracle enough." And I'd learned that I probably shouldn't go naked into the forest.

When Monty West did just that, I wonder what he learned. An amateur among pros, a skinny, naked ape afoot in the territory of bigger hippies even hairier than he and better suited to life on the land unadorned—what miracles were vouchsafed to him?

We're not likely to find out, since he has disappeared into the wilds of Wallingford or the San Juan Islands or somewhere. But I feel certain that one night, curled up against the cold in a moss-and-beargrass nest of his own making, his hunger dulled with berries and mushrooms and miner's lettuce and cold water, as alone as he could ever be, Monty West discovered one pure thing: what it is to be both human and animal at once. He might be one of the very few among us to know such a thing, for we have long tried to forget how to be animals. Out where Bigfoot walks, it is the only knowledge that counts.

# III

# DEVILS IN HEAVEN

# 12
# “Bigfoot Baby Found in Watermelon, Has Elvis’s Sneer”

*“A mysterious creature—that’s news, Ishmael. The fact that people see it—that’s news.”*

—David Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*

The Logs is a fine old country tavern, a blend of modern tack and old wood and the reek of burgers and beer and smoke. Covered in creeper and striped with old mortar, it is built of green vines and conversation as much as the logs of its name.

Driving on a vanishing road that led dimly in the dusk to the forest of Monte Cristo, I turned back and dropped down to BZ Corner for a burger and a beer. Inside the tavern, piny walls held up Mount Rainier in a beer ad with illuminated animal figurines. Jolly photos of the regular patrons leered from laminated tabletops. As their neon logos promised, Bud and Rainier were on tap, but also Full Sail Ale from the sailboard town of Hood River, across the Columbia Gorge. A stuffed iguana and bowling trophies on the mantel of the great stone fireplace rounded out the decor.

At the bar, attempting a jocular tone, I asked about local Bigfoot reports. Most of the drinkers laughed it off. But one man, Hank, had grown up around Spirit Lake, where he’d heard many stories. A friend of his in Longview, a grandson of one of the 1924 Ape Canyon survivors, claimed to possess his grandfather’s rifle, which was “twisted like licorice.” “I know another guy,” he told me, warming to it, “who came to work on a logging show and found fifty-gallon oil drums tossed off the landing like bushel baskets.” He spoke of a Bigfoot sighting by a busload of people near Bellingham. “I won’t discount it,” said Hank. “After all—who’s gonna call bullshit on it?”

Who indeed? No one can prove that Bigfoot isn’t there. Perhaps we can say with some confidence that the last dusky seaside sparrow has dropped out and confirm to our satisfaction that there are no more passenger pigeons. Yet black-footed ferrets were found when all were thought to be gone, and ivory-billed woodpeckers are now known to survive in Cuba. Extinction, or absolute absence, is difficult to demonstrate. We can proclaim with confidence that there is no elephant in a given room at a given time. Lacking any likely fossils, we

agree that Minotaurs and unicorns probably did not walk the earth in the way that bulls and horses do. But proving the nonexistence of an animal with adequate fossil precursors in an immense area of wild and tangled character is a centaur of a different color.

The world at large might consider Bigfoot an intriguing possibility rather than a nutso folly if it weren't for the creature's enthusiastic adoption by the trashy tabloids. Whatever their entertainment value for bored shoppers queuing in supermarkets, these pulp purveyors of putty for drafty brains ensure that anything they embrace wholeheartedly (itself a dubious proposition) is sure to be regarded, by those who consider themselves sensible, as absolute codswallop.

I enjoy scanning the tabloids. Sometimes I pick a longer line (or ask Thea to take care of the checkout) so I can surreptitiously skim the more outrageous contents—the many resurrections of JFK, the omnipresence of Elvis, the obesities that make me look like a beanpole, the babies born with alligator eyes, the endless possibilities of impregnation. But as much as I enjoy the aliens ("Martians Take Over Wall Street"), the unlikely couplings ("Toddler Weds Great-grandmother"), and the wild hybrids ("Cat Gives Birth to Furred Frog"), I find myself wondering who really buys these things. Some sales go to sneering disbelievers drawn to the lurid headlines for their entertainment value. But many readers of straight prose must share my blend of fascination and horror that there are enough gullible or mindless people to keep these cynical serials afloat.

This is now the habitat of Bigfoot in the popular mind: the pages of sensational rags that trade on people's foolish hopes, real fears, and profound ignorance. How are we to consider Sasquatch seriously when his cohabitants are dead presidents, revivified rock stars, and pregnant pumpkins?

One rock "star" who is very much alive gave me some insights on Bigfoot and the tabloids. I'd enjoyed the songs of Mojo Nixon that I'd heard on the radio, such as "Elvis Is Everywhere" and "Debbie Gibson Is Pregnant with My Two-headed Love Child." One summer while teaching in Vermont, I met a singer and teacher named Bobby Parker, who is a good friend of Mojo's. The two had taken a cross-country bicycle ride some years before, during which, Bobby said, "Mojo found his name and his vision."

That vision is a sublimely twisted one of warm beer and love in old Impalas out beneath the power lines, no lost love for malls and banks, and rude romance ("My Baby Is Vibrator Dependent"). Mojo is not for everyone. But he has a remarkable handle on what makes people tick, especially people who buy the tabloids—like Don Henley's lyric in the song "If Dirt Were Dollars": "I was

flyin back from Lubbock, I saw Jesus on the plane . . . or maybe it was Elvis. You know, they kinda look the same."

When Mojo performed in Seattle, I went backstage afterward to meet him and to mention having met Bobby. But Bobby had beaten me to it; Mojo said, "Oh, yeah—you're the butterfly guy!" I wanted to ask him about Bigfoot. One of his songs, "The Amazing Bigfoot Diet," deals with the cooption of the big fella by the tabloids. It begins "I married a Bigfoot, gave birth to my mother." Credulousness is one of Mojo's big topics. After his success with "Elvis Is Everywhere" ("You know what's going on down in that Bermuda Triangle?" asks the lyric. "Elvis needs boats!"), he installed a 1-800-Elvis line, at his own expense, to hear people's Elvis sightings and insights. Hundreds of people called in to relate their experiences with the King, exceeding even Mojo's expectations of the lowest common denominator.

"Yeah," he told me, "I figure a lot of the Bigfoot people must be like these Elvis cats."

"How's that, Mojo?" I asked.

"Well, with these folks," he replied, "it's not a matter of not having both oars in the water. They don't even have a boat!"

——

For a while now I've been collecting tabloid articles about Yeti-like phenomena. This not only gives me a chance to purchase the execrable items (a delicious act of virtuous slumming), but also expands my sense of how Bigfoot is viewed in these circles.

Many of the stories appear in the *Sun*, such as "I Am the Mother of Bigfoot Baby: Woman's amazing tale of survival in the wilderness." Debbie Bates was kidnapped and raped by an eight-foot Bigfoot, then escaped when he got in a fight with a grizzly. Debbie, described by writer John Coffin as being "ugly as sin," was shown happily bottle-feeding a young chimp. She shared the front-page headlines with a Civil War hero found alive in the South Carolina woods and an obsessive Presleyana collector who named his son Elvis and his home Graceland Too.

The *Sun* also revealed "Proof in Bible: Bigfoot Exists." John Coffin, something of a Sasquatch authority by now, reported on a biblical scholar's conclusion that the giants referred to in Genesis were the ancestors of Bigfoot.

When the offspring of Cain bred with women, they begat the Neandertals. (This is actually not so far from Beowulf's way of accounting for Grendel.) If you turned the page you got the Terror Truck, a ghostly trucker who plays chicken with motorists on the highways of Tennessee; a dog-faced baby, and "Happy Hubby Makes 2 Sisters Pregnant 11 Times."

Another issue gave us the "First Ever Photos of Bigfoot: Mountain drama as brave climber meets 700 pounds of fighting fury," by William Rock. Climbing in Oregon, Leonard Morton came across a particularly fat, pear-shaped Bigfoot, with a head as big as its torso, and caught the image on his camcorder. Then "the crazed creature from hell chased the brave adventurer into a small cave, where it kept him pinned for a terrifying eight hours." Just for fun, Peter Byrne of the Bigfoot Research Project analyzed the photographs. He showed that two shots, supposedly taken some distance apart in space and time, were merely reverse views of the same pose. No surprise. The story appeared along with the genetic bonanza of a leopard girl who got a new face, a baby who glowed in the dark, a runaway boy who had a sex-change operation, and a woman who gave birth to triplets of three races.

Wilderness encounters provide much of the *Sun*'s grist. "Bigfoot Captured Alive—He's Human (monster is gentle as a baby)" showed the Manitoba captive in a decidedly nongentle pose looking a lot like Lon Chaney, Jr., as Wolf Man. Of course, he escaped, so he was slightly overshadowed by the fat man who exploded after winning a pie-eating contest.

Another capture was reported in the *Weekly World News*, claiming, "Scientists bag 7-foot creature in MONTANA!" Dick Donovan wrote the scoop on Dr. Leonard Owens's bagging of the beast with a tranquilizing dart. In this version the creature had the rheumy eyes, nose, and mouth of a down-and-outer captured for a makeup session and photo op outside the Salvation Army mission in Butte. The photo was as different from the *Sun*'s as a mouse is from a cat. A later issue reported his inevitable escape in the Vienna Woods, where he had been flown for tests; two armed guards were found with their skulls crushed. The lead story, even with its recycled photos of the wino from Butte, had to compete with the world's first potty-trained frog.

The *Weekly World News*'s next two Bigfoot stories had to do with babies. Tucked into an issue with a wax dummy of Hitler that cried real tears, a man who ate a live bat, and Siamese twins who fought over their boyfriend was "World's First Photo of a Bigfoot Baby." Dutch anthropologists in southwest China kidnapped the thirty-two-pound infant with six-inch feet from its

screaming eight-foot mother. The baby was hairy all over except for its humanlike face. A later issue tells Katie Martin's story. Unlike Debbie Bates, Katie wasn't abducted; she met Bigfoot while hiking at Mount Rainier and fell in love when he brought her flowers and berries. Later she had his baby. The mother-son portrait showed young Kelly with ordinary limbs and a furry face with a mashed nose—just the reverse of the Chinese baby. Other stories in the *News* told of a terrified teen who touched Bigfoot in a dark barn; a hermit trapper with a Bigfoot friend who came to visit when UFOs were in the vicinity; a pair of Yetis who were air traffic controllers for a fleet of UFOs; and Chinese soldiers who shot "the world's last female Bigfoot."

Given this constant barrage of weirdness, is it any wonder that serious-minded individuals regard reports of a large, hairy humanoid with something less than openness and generosity of spirit?

——

What I find particularly compelling about the relegation of Bigfoot to the dregs of journalism—or to the heights of hyperbolic print entertainment, if you prefer—is the vast distance between the myth's honorable past and its present media purgatory. How did this universal archetype, whose likeness can be found in almost every culture and in whom great power has been vested for many centuries, become so degraded?

It might be valuable to review the ubiquity of hairy-giant traditions. We have seen how prevalent and enduring is the hairy-devil/wild Indian figure in West Coast Native American history. But similar entities are found among Indians all over North America, ranging from the Algonkian Windigo or Witiko, a cannibal man-beast of the North Woods, to the Iroquois and Cherokee giants called Stoneclad. And the Pacific Coast Bigfoot figures continue north well into Alaska.

Martha Demientieff, a native Alutiiq writer and teacher whose family runs a river transport company, told me of a Yukon village deserted as recently as the summer of 1992 because of the appearance of the Wood Man, sometimes known as Neginla-eh. And on a recent trip to Homer, Alaska, I became acquainted with a rich lode of Bigfoot tradition on the Kenai Peninsula. The residents of English Bay tell of many encounters with Nantiinaq, who could change from Bigfoot into any other form. Some of the stories were collected in a magazine called

*Fireweed Cillqaq*. “They said there used to be real ones before,” wrote Kathy Kvasnikoff. “When you got close and tried to touch them like this, nothing would be there.”

Bigfoot has several counterparts in Asia. The Yeti, or abominable snowman, is of course the best known. Yeti became international news when mountaineer Eric Shipton found a clear set of tracks near Mount Everest in 1951. *The Long Walk*, a 1956 memoir by Slavomir Rawicz, told of the wartime escape of five men from Siberia across the Himalaya. A close run-in with two seven-foot-tall, reddish Yeti caused them to change their route and lose a man in a crevasse. *The Atlantic Monthly* of November 1975 carried an account by Edward W. Cronin, Jr., of snowman history and lore. Cronin, a scientist conducting an ecological survey of the Arun Valley of far eastern Nepal, became a believer when he discovered a long trail of prints similar to those in Shipton’s photographs. The walker had appeared beside Cronin’s tent in the night, then left the camp and crossed extremely steep terrain. And Peter Matthiessen, in *The Snow Leopard*, wrote of “a dark shape” he saw jump behind a boulder, “much too big for a red panda, too covert for a musk deer, too dark for wolf or leopard, and much quicker than a bear. With binoculars I stare for a long time at the mute boulder, feeling the presence of unknown life behind it, but all is still, there is only the sun and morning mountainside, the pouring water.” Matthiessen returned from a later expedition to eastern Nepal with photographs of prints that he regards as good candidates for snowman tracks. And so Yeti lives on.

But Yeti is only one of the Asian Bigfeet. There is also the Alma of Mongolia, depicted in Tibetan natural histories, and the related Almasty, or Wild Man of the Caucasus; Yeh Ren, the Chinese Wildman, which has been reported for at least twenty-five hundred years; and the Yeti-like Chuchunaa of Siberia. These creatures are taken seriously by many in Asia, even considered mundane among Caucasian herdsmen. Peter Matthiessen has told me that both he and George Schaller have open minds about several Asian species. Large-scale Eurasian search efforts have been funded recently by organizations ranging from the BBC to the Chinese government. According to the London *Sunday Times*, a million-dollar Franco-Russian expedition planned to go into Kazakhstan. Led by Marie-Jeanne Koffmann, a twenty-year veteran of the chase, the high-tech team intended to “capture an Alma with the help of the local population. We want to take a mould of its face and specimens of its hair, skin, and blood and then set it free with a radiotracer band. There is to be no King Kong spectacle of bringing it back.” According to British archaeologist Myra Shackley, the Chinese have

designated a portion of the Shennongjia forest as a Yeti reserve. Shackley believes that Asian man-apes might well represent surviving Neandertals or their descendants.

Ape-monster traditions come not only from mountainous regions but also from islands, deserts, and the tropics. They include the Cigouave, a voodoo-related Haitian forest beast; the Oreng-Pendek or Sedapa of Borneo and Sumatra; the Orang-Dalam of Malaysia; the Agogue of East Africa; and the Duendi of Colombia. There are swamp beasts galore, the Moth Man, the Gray Man of the Carolinas, and a wide array of troglodytes. Few cultures lack a human-faced hairy monster, giant, or wild man.

It would be a mistake to think that Yeti-like entities are the property only of "primitive" cultures. Woodmen and forest gods and goddesses loomed large in Hellenistic, Phoenician, and other proto-European societies. So prominent and diverse were forest, cave, and other wildlings in relatively modern legends and beliefs that the great Swedish taxonomist Carolus Linnaeus actually recognized and named several species, including *Homo troglodytes*, *H. nocturnus*, *H. sylvestris*, and *H. ferus*. Wildman images lasted well into modern times in Europe, at least as an artistic footnote to the dominant culture.

Probably the best known of these figures is the Green Man. As explained by William Anderson in *Green Man: The Archetype of Our Oneness with the Earth*, "The Green Man signifies irrepressible life." The counterpart of the Great Goddess, he smuggled the pagan preoccupation with plants and the rest of nature into Christian tradition. Anderson's book shows images of the Green Man—vines, tendrils, and leaves sprouting from his mouth or entwining his head—decorating ecclesiastical architecture throughout Europe. Shades of the Green Man may be reflected in Robin Hood, the King of the May, the Jolly Green Giant, and ultimately the botanist: a Green Man graces the main gates of Kew Gardens in London, the very seat of plant study.

So when I sat in the Quartz Creek greenwood looking for Silenus, satyrs, fauns, and zephyrs (all of which are anglewing butterflies as well as rustic pagan deities), Bigfoot might have walked in and sat down beside us and been in perfectly suitable company. If Sasquatch is not Pan, Puck, Silenus, Dionysus, Enkidu of *Gilgamesh*, and Robin Goodfellow; if Dzonoqua is not Diana, Demeter, Astarte, Gaia, Maya, the Great Goddess, and Mother Nature, then they are damned close to it. For what are any of these characters but embodiments of nature, the earth, and all that is green and contrary to control?

We live in an age when control—the grid, the boot, the gun, the nozzle, the

law—has the upper hand. We have lost the wild repositories of power beyond the campfire, the mythic figures in which we might invest our fears, whom we might supplicate in pursuit of hope. Instead we have religions that rule behavior and perpetuate themselves through the application of order and conformity. For all of its values, contemporary religious life offers little of the all-embracing ardor of any "pagan" culture.

The secular world lacks even that pallid and weird mythical figure, the devil (whose medieval form was concocted from the repressed wreckage of the arch-satyr Pan). Reason and rationality have sought to replace the need for the superstitions that upheld nearly all societies of the past and still prop up many in the present. But we don't really behave rationally. Most of us have no sense of the stochasticity of the world—the natural history of chance—or of what cause and effect really mean. Churchgoers or not, people tend to behave deterministically, as if there really were such a thing as fate. Though the end of superstition might be an advance, most people still adhere to it, calling it luck or faith. In seeking to banish the terrors beyond the city walls, we have either subordinated our spirits to some "spiritual" system or traded them for the illusory comforts of the material world.

Now we are seeing a rebirth of the desire to combine nature and spirit among some earnest folk who value the religious impulse yet feel religion has resided too far from the real world for too long. Earth and Spirit conferences and celebrations, the Green Spirituality and Green Cross movements, the writings of Matthew Fox and Thomas Berry and other more or less apostate priests and teachers, and the emergence of neopagan followers of the "old religion" are all manifestations of this urge to reintegrate what many see as elemental urges too long in conflict.

As an interested heathen, I have watched various efforts to woo Gaia back into spiritual life, to rehabilitate the Horned One, to turn the considerable energy and resources of religion toward the problems of environmental conservation. The basic approach is heartening and infinitely more desirable than the contrarian practice of many fundamentalist institutions, which would banish nature altogether in pursuit of ultimate control.

A simple and reliable test of a creed's standing on these issues is to ask how its adherents regard the term "wilderness." Those to whom it is anathema, something to be avoided and subdued, are on a one-way track toward irrelevance. Religions that revere wilderness, however, as the home of our neighbors, as well as the place where devouts and prophets from Jesus to John

Muir have sought enlightenment, may be part of the solution.

Unfortunately, much of the regreening movement is highly naive about nature and prone to confusing oatmeal with ideas. The headlong rush to embrace everything Native American (to the intense discomfiture and resentment of many Indians); the wholesale adoption of pantheism and animism without any awareness of their motivations, history, or special knowledges; and the conflation of the Green Man (who, like Dzonoqua, is sexually ambiguous) with the "wild man" of muzzy-minded men's groups all detract from the possible potency of these movements.

This is where we get back to Bigfoot, for Bigfoot has much to do with potency. If hairy giants represent the same archetype as the Green Man and the Goddess, mightn't they also suggest a model for reintegration? As ethnologist Marjorie Halpin wrote in *Manlike Monsters on Trial*, whether as "missing link" or as a quality of ba'wis [Tsimshian for Bukwus-ness] manifesting throughout nature, the Sasquatch is a recognition of the connection between the human and the natural." Or as permaculture guru Bill Devall put it in *Simple in Means, Rich in Ends*, Sasquatch is the "ideal man-nature being."

If the myths often regard Bigfoot as a bogey, they also invest it with serious and important powers. And isn't that the way with nature? The world is both scary and empowering. It is this duality of intimidating force and becalming strength that made it necessary for many religious dogmas to edit nature out. Adam and Eve were not expelled from the garden; they turned their backs on it when their authors edited out the Goddess. As Joseph Campbell put it in *The Power of Myth*, "When the Hebrews came in, they really wiped out the Goddess. The term for the Canaanite goddess that's used in the Old Testament is 'the Abomination.'"

The Hebrews were not alone in relegating nature to the profane. As Campbell went on to tell Bill Moyers, "The Christian separation of matter and spirit, of natural grace and supernatural grace, has really castrated nature. And the European mind, the European life, has been, as it were, emasculated by this separation. The true spirituality, which would have come from the union of matter and spirit, has been killed. And then what did the pagan represent? He was a person from the suburbs of Eden. He was regarded as a nature man." Am I alone in seeing the shadow of Sasquatch at the gates of Eden?

Campbell concluded, "Spiritual life is the bouquet, the perfume, the flowering and fulfillment of a human life, not a supernatural virtue imposed upon it." Moyers then asked, "Is this what Thomas Mann meant when he talked about

mankind being the noblest work because it joins nature and spirit?" Campbell replied, "Yes." And when Robinson Jeffers, in "November Surf," referred to the "two-footed / Mammal, being someways one of the nobler animals," he was hoping for a time when mankind "regains the dignity of room, the value of rareness."

As we seek such a state and names for the natural world to help us live with it instead of against it, could Bigfoot be an ambassador for a truly green spirituality? An icon with shoulders broad enough to accept our mortal dread, and honest enough to promise the earth as long as we both last, has a real appeal. Hardly a god, but maybe doing the same job if, as Campbell says, "gods are guides to the deep center of truth."

Unfortunately we may have gone too far in devaluing the thing we call Bigfoot to ever bring it back into respectability. Largely this is the result of a basic difference between how we view reality and how the Kwakiutl view it. To us something is real if we can see or touch it every time we look for it. To them it might be solid now and phantasmic tomorrow yet be equally real. The adoption of an absolutist or positivist view of the world, a figment of Western thought with roots in Aristotle, Newton, and Spencer, militates against appreciation of the Kwakiutl view. When the Greeks and Romans traded their old pantheon, what we've all grown up calling "classical mythology," for monotheism, they gave up all the sweet and maddening ambivalence of their gods.

They sacrificed, in short, a universe in which chariots pulled the sun and thunderbolts were thrown by pissed-off, imperfect gods, where mortals might marry gods and be blinded, killed, or eaten for it, then reemerge in another form. They traded whimsy and pregnant possibility for the idea of order, swapped all sorts of resurrections for just one. The new ethical order, if observed, was at least more humane, if no more rational. But in the deal they gave up the kind of relationship with nature that allowed the likes of centaurs and satyrs to romp.

You would think that the religiously mystical should be able to accept the possibility of transcendent states of existence, such as resurrection. But if a certain magic is not to be found in the scripture of a particular creed, it is out of bounds, in the realm of the Beast. For the so-called secular, the scripture is likely to be *National Geographic*. If it's not there, it's not at all.

The old bestiaries suggested the existence of phoenixes and rocs and all sorts of weird organisms, even hippos and rhinos. That narwhals turned out to be "real" and unicorns "unreal" would have mattered little to the compilers, who

were more concerned with recording what men thought was out there than documenting natural diversity. Nowadays biogeographers believe only in what they can be shown. I understand this impulse and act on it in my butterfly studies. But whatever we have gained through the objectivity of Western science, we have lost in the utility of rocs and phoenixes and all creatures beyond the pale of the cabinet or the cage.

The very fact that the word “myth” has come to mean in the common parlance an erroneous idea or mistake reflects our collective faith in one-dimensional reality. As Campbell and Moyers richly showed in *The Power of Myth*, a myth is simply a system of belief. And many of the most enduring belief systems do not have our myopia.

Now come the new cosmologists and the quantum physicists who, going Einstein one (or several) better, tell us that the world is a relative place after all. Interpreted in one way, modern physics suggests that the Kwakiutl could be right: Dzonoqua today might be here and rock-solid real and tomorrow exist on the other side of a dimension that hasn’t been named or numbered. Of course, you won’t find a physicist who really supports the notion of some Bigfoot enthusiasts (those without a boat, in Mojo’s words) that Bigfoot moves between dimensions at will. Quantum mechanics tend to tinker at the edges of universes and in deep time and other imponderables, not so much in the here and now. But the point—and the irony—is that we seem to be coming back, kicking and screaming, into an intellectual environment where logical positivism has to scramble to stay on top.

Realities differ. I have a brother whose reality today is vastly different from the one he perceived prior to a head-on encounter with a cattle truck. A psychiatrist we once consulted told me that to try to change his mind about the reality of his “delusions” would be futile, that they are as real to him as asphalt or elm trees are to me. The membrane between reality and dreams was one of the tissues rearranged in his brain. Though Howard’s wit, subtlety, intelligence, and vocabulary remained intact, his version of events and his apprehension of the world have changed dramatically. I have given up telling him that he was not the Ivory Soap baby.

In the same way, to those who see, in Chief Lelooska’s words, “with Indian eyes,” realities about Bigfoot (and many other entities) are relative. In a generous extension of this logic one might propose that to the readers of tabloids the stories are real. Perhaps they are the visionaries among us, the ones who are able to see past our heritage of Western objectivity into the rich realms of

alternative realities. After all, some of the boatless people's narratives have all the imaginative flair and color of the wilder aboriginal myths. But I am not that generous. These people need help. The difference is that while Indian traditions are held in common by entire clans or tribes and are told with a mixture of respect and whimsy, these modern myths tend to be taken in dead earnest by particularly unconnected individuals. I wouldn't be surprised if it is their very alienation that drives them into the arms of aliens.

One person who heard of my interest in Bigfoot wrote, "I have been in contact with a starship commander and several specialists aboard his fleet for almost a year now. [They have told me that] Sasquatch has the ability to move from the 3rd dimension to the 4th, at will." Bigfeet live in sovereign, matriarchal tribes, communicate through shamans, heal wounds instantly, channel, and travel through mental projection. "My frustration," he concluded, "is knowing they exist, but being unable to assist them in protecting their habitat, since proof of where they live doesn't exist. And if proof was available, the area would become, I fear . . . a shooting range."

Another correspondent predicted that I would have a close encounter based on the numerology of my name. "Your master numbers in all three names would cause a harmless resonance that the sasquatch crowd would recognize and respond to." He went on, "If we are 3-D, they are around 5-D . . . About all a shotgun would do would pepper their aura field." A third enthusiast announced that "the world is going through an incredible transitional period that has to do with God (not religion), ETs/UFOs + Bigfoot. Prepare for survival in the '90s." I'm sorry; these are not the words of shamans.

The tabloidization of the world seems no different from the general spread of dross in the mass culture today. Examples abound: television almost in toto. Walmarts and malls instead of vital town centers. Vocabulary's decline. Bestseller lists. Lite music, food, and beer—oxymorons all. And architecture: I recently saw a historic photograph of a magnificent hotel, the Louvre, that once stood in Astoria, Oregon. On its site now stands a McDonald's. The barbarians are not at the gates; they're well inside.

Bigfoot has not escaped the march of mediocrity and tacky commercialization. As the late primatologist John Napier wrote in his important book *Bigfoot: The Yeti and Sasquatch in Myth and Reality*, "Bigfoot in some quarters of North America has become Big Business, a commodity to be exploited to the full. It can no longer be considered simply as a natural phenomenon that can be studied with the techniques of a naturalist; the entrepreneurs have moved in and folklore

has become fakelore." And that was in 1973. Since then the Oregon Tourism Division has featured a frame from the Patterson-Gimlin film on a flier labeled "Oregon Scavenger Hunt Item #17 (a direct-mail piece with gratuitous shock-value photo of Bigfoot)."

A silly-looking Harrison Bigfoot was the official mascot of the Washington State Centennial, and the Seattle Sonics have another version. The name "Bigfoot" denotes pizzas, monster trucks, and innumerable campgrounds and motels. Not only Willow Creek in California but also Harrison Hot Springs in British Columbia and Carson, Mount Baker, and Elma in Washington hold annual Bigfoot revels. These are all in good fun. But the footraces with big plywood feet, the clowns in gorilla suits, and the endless array of Sasquatch foodstuffs and doodads encourage little real respect for a venerable myth.

The Northwest Indians, with their masks, totems, and tales, might be said to have commercialized Sasquatch first. Dzonoqua was sometimes involved in the breaking of a copper, one of the most important potlatch transactions. But as Lelooska explained it to me, Dzonoqua was a figure that impinged on many aspects of life besides potlatch—wealth, power, the chieftancy, forest mysteries, and so on. There is no such depth to the contemporary exploitation of Bigfoot.

Bigfoot became a staple of the scandal sheets when the Patterson-Gimlin film called attention to a possible monster in our midst, then left us wondering. It was inevitable. So was the movie *Harry and the Hendersons*, which was actually not an unsympathetic treatment. In the end we must ask, has popular culture devalued a great myth or given it new life? I think I know how Dzonoqua and the Green Man would vote.

But there are other, brighter signs that a respect for the old traditions might not be dead. Among the many sensational treatments of Bigfoot can be found a number of titles that treat the subject intelligently, with subtle humor and suitable respect, and with care for both the language and the importance of myth. Notable among these is David George Gordon's *Field Guide to Sasquatch*, published by Sasquatch Books of Seattle.

The small shelf of Bigfoot fiction is largely filled with rustic murder mysteries and salacious tales somehow involving Sasquatch as malefactor or local color. But lately several writers of stature have turned their attention to the big fellow. Scott Russell Sanders's *Bad Man Ballad* is the best of the Bigfoot novels I've seen. In his short stories "Bigfoot Stole My Wife" and "I Am Bigfoot," in *The News of the World*, Ron Carlson plays off the urban legend of predatory Bigfoot to probe restlessness from both sides of a broken equation. In *Bigfoot Dreams*

novelist Francine Prose describes a trash journalist who identifies with the Bigfoot of her crazy stories. Both authors play off the tabloids and come to opposite but equally desperate conclusions. Carlson's bereft character says, "Believe it. Everything. Everything you read. Everything you hear . . . Believe the small hairs on the back of your neck. Believe all of history, and every version of history, and all the predictions for the future . . . Everything has happened. Everything is possible . . . I gotta believe it." To Prose's Vera it's all false hopes. "Your dead ones aren't really dead. Cucumber slices will cure your arthritis. Elvis is alive and well on Mars. Your alien lover is at this very moment winging toward you via UFO. It's not true, Vera thinks. None of it."

Some distinguished essayists have also written memorably on manlike monsters. Doris Lessing's piece "The Thoughts of a Near-Human" is labeled fiction by the *Partisan Review*. It is an account of a Yeti distanced from its own kind through contact with humans, then driven to contemplate suicide by captors who fit it with a transmitter before releasing it. Told from the animal's viewpoint, the story has all the moral authority of the writer's powerful essays. In *The Klamath Knot*, a splendid exploration of evolution myths in southwest Oregon, David Rains Wallace treats forest giants in a manner worthy of their lineage. "The giants who left their tracks near Bluff Creek are eloquent mythic expressions of evolutionary uncertainty," he writes. "Are they competitive lords of the snow forest? Cooperative children of the ancestral forest? Are they human? Are they alive?" And Washington writer Wenonah Sharpe, in "Some Thoughts on Sasquatch Watching," speaks of our good fortune in having "an indigenous wraith, a shadow still dancing on the cave wall, a sylvan deity not yet vanquished by the inexorable march of science and universal education."

At least one fine Bigfoot poem has emerged. In her "Oratorio for Sasquatch, Man, and Two Androids," Margaret Atwood wrote: "Sasquatch: *A wound has been made in me,* a hole opens in my green flesh; *I see that I can be broken . . . to murder my pines, my cedars* is to murder me." Atwood, like Lessing, treats Bigfoot as a vessel of alienation and profligacy. Wendell Berry's "To the Unseeable Animal" can be read as a love song to the mystery of the beast beyond.

Sculptor Richard Cook has found the animal's humor. Cook describes himself as a practitioner of Beringerology, the study (and manufacture) of fake fossils, named for Dr. Johann Beringer, the victim of a notorious paleontological hoax. But he creates his pieces to delight, not to fool anyone. Working in clay from the Whiskey Creek beds next to his cabin near Port Angeles, Washington, Cook

creates a wonderful array of extinct animals both hilarious and ingenious. These he gives wildly punning English and scientific names such as the Culture Vulture (*Omniverons*) and the antlered Sconcetron (*Candelabraferens*), a forerunner of Rudolph. Cook has done two species of humanoid giants: Big Foot (*Megalopodus*), whose black skull bears great tusks; and Quelbitrax (*Flagrantedelicto*), "a specialized sasquatchian cousin," whose teeth are like barbed spearpoints. "They must have made it a formidable biter," writes Cook, "though I should think it would have had a hell of a time disengaging afterward." Maybe that's why it's extinct.

A new and supple Bigfoot is emerging in music as well, in the lyrics of several singer-songwriters in Sasquatch country. The Dorsches, a musical family from Aberdeen, south of Washington's giant-rich Olympic Mountains, have recorded a lovely song called "Footsteps in the Wind." It tells the story of a young girl finding a huge track by the river and wondering, "Could Bigfoot have been here, or am I imagining he's near *Oh, I wonder if he's watching me, or if he might appear* Think I hear / Your footsteps in the wind." In the haunting harmonics of the repeated refrain, you feel the immanence of something large, important, and good.

J. W. Sparrow is a folksinger who lives in the Bigfoot territory of Mount Rainier's foothills. His song "The Man in the Mirror" tells of "a man up on the mountain, with his hair down to his knees," who is "standing tall for all of us who say that we still care / about this blue shining jewel we all share *A gentle voice whispering, 'Yes, compared to what,'* a message concerning the paradise we've got." Sparrow's refrain too is a compelling one: "It's the man in the mirror, the last mystery / The one you often hear about but very seldom see."

It is "the man in the mirror" who is the problem here, and if we go a little green around the gills at the realization, it will only heighten the effect. We must cleave to the Green Man, we must grasp the Goddess; however, we try to avoid them. Someday we will discover interdependency, or else. The recovery of respect for "a creature that would understand forests in ways we cannot," in Wallace's words, will only hasten the day we take responsibility for our own footprint on the land.

In the meantime, what are curious people to think? Phil Bunton, editorial director of the Globe Communications tabloids, told the *Los Angeles Times*, "Our readers want to believe this stuff. The world is very boring."

The credulous public, caught between the cynical tabloids and the skeptical scientists, are unable to use the archetype's power to enrich their lives. Is there a

third way to regard Bigfoot with a truly open mind—realizing that its flesh-and-blood existence among the deer and the ravens is an open question and at the same time that it clearly exists in the hearts and minds of many?

Dr. John Mack, Pulitzer Prize–winning professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, believes that UFO abductees should be taken seriously. If he's right, aliens may one day graduate to the *New York Times*. Our methods of empirical observation need to be stretched, he says, to appreciate the experiences his patients have related to him. Echoing Lelooska, Mack says we have so constricted our consciousness that we cannot experience what the Indians call the spirit world. Carl Sagan regards the public credulity about aliens and other tabloid-type tales as evidence of widespread scientific ignorance. Considering the popular denial of evolutionary biology, I tend to agree. Unlike my correspondent who tells me that aliens are helping Sasquatch colonize prefab habitats in space ("they leave with great reluctance. After all, Earth is their home"), I don't believe that Bigfoot has the remotest connection to UFOs. But maybe both phenomena should cause us to reexamine how we judge the testimony of the universe.

For the world is not boring. The Green Man is coming back and will lift the scales from our blindered eyes. And who knows? Maybe this time he will take the face of Bigfoot, and the Goddess will don Dzonoqua's mask.

Will we rescue the myth from the gutter, restoring its green shimmer, its beauty, power, and potential? If we do, the habitat of the giant will truly become our own. Until then we will have to be content to meet Bigfoot at the supermarket checkout stands. For there he will surely be found, hanging out with the King.

# 14

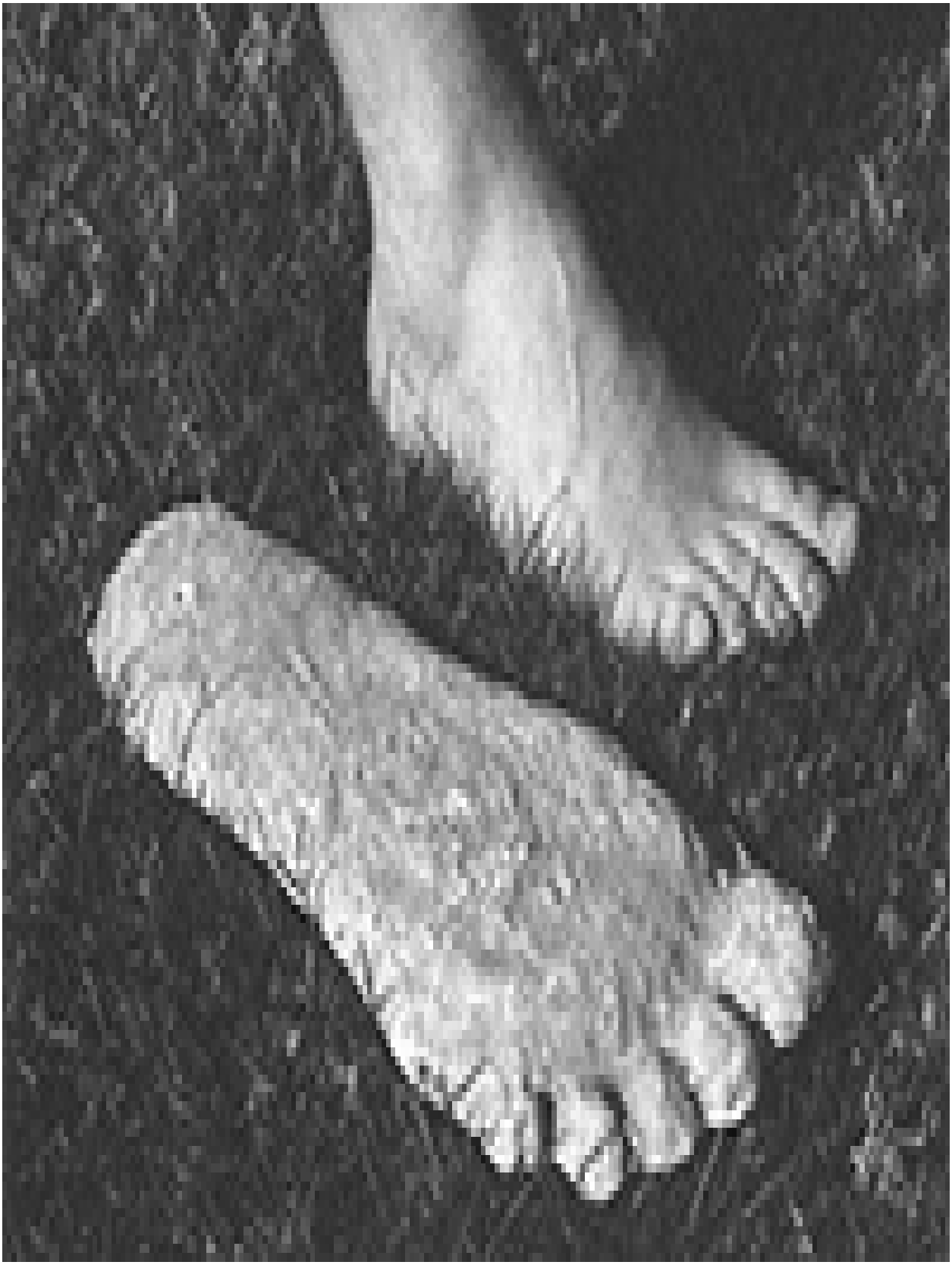
# Natural History of the Bigfoot Hunters

*This may very well be the destiny of the lonely Sasquatch, to be perpetually obscured by those who try hardest to discover it.*

—Michael M. Ames, *Manlike Monsters on Trial*

Two plaster casts stand on my work table. One, bought from the Western Bigfoot Society, was taken from a mold made in 1967 at the site of the Patterson-Gimlin film at Bluff Creek in northern California. Pressed in gray Mount St. Helens ash, this copy is gray, fourteen inches long, six across, and obviously hominoid: a big footprint or a fake. The other cast is the one I made at Deep Lake. It is about an inch shorter and narrower than the Bluff Creek cast, and it lacks obvious toes, but the possible heel, big toe, and ball of the foot aren't bad. To me it suggests the press of a primate foot: a big footprint or a feature of erosion.

So I was prepared to leave the matter until I saw in an issue of *Smithsonian* an article by Richard Wolkomir on recent anthropological finds in the Americas. A photograph said to represent a child's footprint preserved in Chilean sandstone looked strikingly like the negative of my Deep Lake artifact. Recently I showed my cast to Grover Krantz, author of *Big Footprints: A Scientific Inquiry into the Reality of Sasquatch*. Krantz regards the 1967 Patterson-Gimlin film and the prints that came from the area as probably authentic. But he was not impressed with my Indian Heaven plaster; it seemed to him too flat-bottomed for a human footprint. When I compared it with the Chilean print, he said he didn't regard that as a real footprint either.



At Bigfoot Daze in Carson, Washington, I acquired a copy of a plaster cast taken from a mold impressed in Mount St. Helens ash; the original cast was made at Bluff Creek soon after

Patterson's adventure. (Photograph courtesy of T. L. Pyle)

These bits of "evidence"—chunks of plaster, photographs, the dents in earth or rocks—demonstrate one thing for certain: we have no common sense of what constitutes proof of existence, of what evidence really is. This is one of the major reasons for the lack of consensus among those interested in Sasquatch phenomena. But it is only one. Perhaps even more important is the sheer variety of method, motive, and mentality among those who go forth in search of hairy giants. As I began looking into Bigfoot, I found the natural history of the Bigfoot hunters at least as compelling as the animal itself. I soon realized, however, that the personalities and territories of the investigators would become the most time-consuming and trying aspect of the undertaking. None of them reveals his findings or theories unless he trusts that the inquisitor won't rip him off. (The male pronoun is appropriate throughout this discussion, since virtually all of the serious Sasquatch pursuers I've met are males.) All are ego-involved and proprietary when it comes to the fabled object of their pursuit, and each one is an individual, full of foibles and crotchets and more or less obsessed—probably as it should be for seekers of grails. I was fully familiar with all these traits among the many butterfly enthusiasts I have known.

I have also found the Bigfoot hunters to be generous, kind, and helpful, though not usually to one another. Make no mistake: there is a competition going on here, a contest perceived by the participants as the most important possible, with the biggest stakes; the competitors intend to win if at all possible. Some show a spirit of collegiality and a desire to expand our knowledge. Individuality looms large in this enterprise, however, and friendships forged over Bigfoot may be short-lived or carry a tinge of shared suspicion. Except for their tendency to believe in advance of proof, this strange company resembles another idiosyncratic troop, the scientists.

Actually, they don't believe without proof, they simply accept a standard of proof that academic investigators are usually unwilling to allow. This brings us back to plaster casts and to Grover Krantz. A full professor at Washington State University's Department of Anthropology in Pullman, Dr. Krantz is the exception to the amateur status of most of the hunters. He is also much harder-headed than most when it comes to evidence. Even so, he is convinced that unnamed anthropoids walk the woods. Or, rather, one named anthropoid: he thinks Bigfoot is probably a species of *Gigantopithecus*, the enormous apes of the Pliocene and Pleistocene known from tooth and jaw fossils found in Asia.

I visited Krantz on a June Sunday when the campus was bare of students and

my steps were the only echoes in the halls of the handsome old anthropology building. My visit was not a guaranteed success since, in an essay on the ethics of the Bigfoot hunt in *Washington* magazine, I had written:

> *Professor Krantz may resent the professional opprobrium he receives as a Bigfoot believer, fallout that simply demonstrates the pre-Copernican attitudes of many scientists. He doesn't deserve their close-minded contempt. But if Krantz dislikes the appellation of crank, he would appreciate even less that of murderer. For if he kills, or causes to be killed, a hominid, then a murderer he will surely be in the minds of many people.*

Nonetheless he greeted me civilly in his laboratory, which was lined with shelves supporting plaster casts of footprints as well as more conventional human and pre-human fossils. A lanky man, Krantz wore blue jeans and a gray work shirt with lots of pens. His hair and beard were the color of his shirt, the hair a thick, trimmed tassel, the beard short on the chin, long on the neck. He flopped in his chair and lit a cigarette ventilated by a device of his own making. Behind specs his eyes warned that he was weary of mindless and repetitive Bigfoot interviews.

In his book Krantz analyzes the available physical and other evidence for Sasquatch and speculates from an informed position on the ecology, biological traits, and evolutionary affinities of this and related putative animals. Respect for this rogue anthropologist, who dares to speak seriously of such matters, has generally increased since the book appeared. He believes that his career and reputation have suffered to some extent because of his warmth for the subject of Bigfoot, but his recent promotion and his colleagues' newfound interest suggest to him that they may be coming around—if not to acceptance, at least to a desirable open-mindedness.

But then, Grover doesn't want people to believe in Bigfoot, at least not the way they once believed in unicorns. He says that believing is something you do because it makes you feel good. At one time he did believe, which he equates with hope. Later he came to *know*, which is something quite different. "I don't believe in Bigfoot," he told me. "I have certain knowledge that causes me to conclude." What is this knowledge? Chiefly the tracks, as he explains in his book, and the Patterson film. I asked to see one of the tracks on which dermal ridges and pores clearly appear, authenticated by forensic pathologists. The print was impressive, yet, he lamented, it did not satisfy the scientific establishment, which is why he insists on the need for a Bigfoot specimen.

Just before I left, he showed me his reconstruction of the skull of

*Gigantopithecus*. Known and respected for his work on *Homo erectus*, Krantz has received both praise and derision for the model. In their 1990 book *Other Origins: The Search for the Giant Ape in Human Prehistory*, Russell Ciochon, John Olsen, and Jamie James engagingly describe their search for fossils in Vietnam and their belief that Giganto (as they call it) cohabited with early man. But they give both Krantz and Bigfoot short shrift. Ignoring his *Gigantopithecus* model, they call his theory that Bigfoot and the extinct ape are identical "threadbare" and dismiss him as "a fervent believer" who "has stepped outside the bounds of science."

As a self-described intuitive iconoclast, Krantz is used to it. He is happy to see minds opening, and one senses that he anticipates the victory being all the sweeter when it comes because of the mockery that has gone before. By his own confession he is no woodsman, and his ultralight helicopter sits grounded in his garage, so Krantz is unlikely to make the discovery himself. But as far as he is concerned, he already has the evidence, and it is up to the others to catch up. Even so, no one will be happier than he when the type specimen is safely lodged in a museum. It is Krantz's insistence on a specimen that makes him controversial and that brought about my earlier indictment of him.

Grover Krantz may be unusual in being an academic on the track of Sasquatch, but he is not the only scientist to treat the subject seriously. Myra Shackley, lecturer in archaeological science at the University of Leicester, stated in her book *Still Living?* that Mongolia's Almas might be a surviving Neandertal and that Yeti and Bigfoot probably exist. Geoffrey Bourne, the former director of the Yerkes Primate Center, wrote in his *Gentle Giants* (1975) that "*Gigantopithecus* may indeed have survived to the present day in very isolated areas" and "might be the animal that is responsible for the Yeti and Bigfoot sightings." And John Napier, the late former director of the Primate Biology Program at the Smithsonian Institution, concluded that a hoax sufficient to explain the facts was even more unlikely than the animal itself.

The symposium "Sasquatch and Related Phenomena," at the University of British Columbia in May 1978, brought together twenty professors in various fields along with several serious laymen to consider the mythology, ethnology, ethology, ecology, biogeography, physiology, psychology, history, and sociology of the subject. All took it seriously, and while few if any accepted the existence of Sasquatch outright, they jointly concluded "that there are not reasonable grounds to dismiss all the evidence as misperception or hoax."

——

So while it is not true, as often asserted, that science has willfully ignored the phenomenon, far and away the greatest number of Bigfoot buffs have been nonacademics, if not antiacademics. It is common at Sasquatch gatherings to hear vicious derogations of the academy for "repressing" information or for blindly ignoring the obvious and thereby pulling the rug out from under the worthy ranks of the dedicated amateurs. These charges, however naive and lacking in empathy for the scientific method, are not without basis. Many tenured or tenure-hopeful scientists have pooh-poohed the topic without any critical attention to its substance. Grover Krantz and the BC Twenty can thus be seen as courageously bucking the tide, sometimes to their detriment.

The amateurs (true lovers of the search) have no such tethers on their enthusiasm. Nor do they labor under the restraints of experimental protocol. This results in a vibrant output of opinions, publications, and theories that run the gamut from brilliant to disturbed, from cleverly intuitive to sloppy and gullible, and from helpful to hopeless.

Most of the Bigfooters begin by gathering all the information they can find, then rejecting those reports or references they deem groundless or unsupportive of their biases. A few of the major players apply certain standards to weed out the more vacuous or obviously fatuous data. Others build great middens of material, like Grendel's bone pile in the mere, where chaff and kernel compost together. Ray Crowe, the big, voluble, white-mustached director of the Western Bigfoot Society, is the model for this catholic approach. His periodical, the *Track Record*, is a repository of all things Bigfootish, from obvious dross to genuinely intriguing gems. Ray says of his all-embracing approach, "Always read with your skepticals on."

Of the many cataloguers, one of the most thorough and opinionated is Danny Perez of the Center for Bigfoot Studies in Norwalk, California. He has published an odd, detailed critique of the Patterson-Gimlin film in his *BigfooTimes*, as well as a very useful bibliography of ape-man publications entitled *Big Footnotes*. Perez is also one of the most outspoken advocates of gunning down a Sasquatch and is known for attempting to do the same to his friends and colleagues in verbal exchanges. In action he is like an impatient terrier, yipping and nipping.

Crowe and Perez typify two morphs of the Bigfoot searcher, in fact two poles occupied by obsessives of all sorts. Sticking with the corvid theme of Ray's

name, you might say that they are both jackdaws, gatherers of all kinds of glittering objects. But while Ray is more the lumbering, deliberate raven, issuing occasional barks or good-natured hoots, Danny apes the jay, forever squawking in a high-pitched and aggressive manner around the eyes and heels of all the other creatures in the wood. Most of the other giant-hunters more resemble magpies—also acquisitive and endlessly curious, but querulous rather than declamatory in their statements and retiring by nature. These several seekers after Sasquatch tend to be very serious, and I began to wonder whether any were in it simply for the fun. When I met Ray Wallace, I found one who was.

Along with the footprint casts on my desk squats a round stone about the size of a high school shot but weighing some four pounds instead of the twelve we hefted when we put that steel ball. The stone was a gift from Ray Wallace, who presented it as an example of a missile that Bigfoot routinely throws to kill deer. To him the existence of round concretions (common formations in sediments) provides perfectly adequate evidence for the presence of hairy monsters that hunt deer. Or else he was having me on.

Shortly after my interest in Bigfoot became known, I received a letter in a childish script from Toledo, Washington, a logging town in the Cascade foothills. It was from Wallace, a Toledo patriarch and, in all senses, a character. He enclosed a couple of snapshots of someone in a gorilla suit, in one photo sitting on a log and in the other tugging at an elk carcass by a stream. He claimed to have encountered Bigfeet often and to have many still photos and motion pictures of them performing various activities. “Let me know what you are interested in and maybe I can help you out, as I have built roads where these giant sized people have roamed for over three hundred years and the only people sees B.F.s are people like me that’s running these big yellow Caterpillars as that’s what the B.F.s are interested in as they will follow a cat around all day and watch us build roads.”

I was surprised to learn that a roadside zoo I remembered along old U.S. Highway 99 (before Interstate 5 was completed)—white deer, bison hunching in the rain—had been “Ray Wallace’s Free Zoo,” a landmark for a generation. That was one of the first things I found out when I went to visit Wallace. The door of his Toledo home was open, and Ray, a big, craggy man in high-waisted dungarees, red Loggers World suspenders, and flannel shirt, with mussed white hair and stubbly jowls, was at ease in a tilted-back La-Z-Boy. I took up a place beside him, and for the next four hours he told me stories.

Wallace was born in Missouri in 1917, and in 1919 his family came west; he

was raised on the Cowlitz River, where Indians camped and taught him to track when he played hooky. Ever since, he has plied the trades of the woods up and down the West Coast. His specialty was building roads into the wilderness, but he also speculated in gold, platinum, oil, beefalo, and Bigfoot.

I had a hard time keeping him on the topic at first. He seemed more interested in telling about UFOs, which he claimed to have seen regularly all around the St. Helens country. One of the first he saw was "back when the Russians put them Spudnicks up . . . it was afoolin' around a star. At Thelma Sorenson's place up Salmon Creek, she 'n' her husband got a divorce and she wanted to sell that flatbed truck . . . We went out there and saw three flying saucers come by, and boy, you talk about moving!" Since then "them dawg-gone flyin' saucers is all over the place." Everybody else around there has seen them too, he maintained.

As president of the Yellow Creek Logging Company, Ray held Forest Service contracts in northern California in the fifties and sixties. It was reports of disturbances to his road-building crews that first drew attention to the Willow Creek area, which has since become "Bigfoot Town, USA." Huge tracks and equipment vandalism, found by worker Jerald Crew and Ray's brother Wilbur, led to extensive newspaper coverage nationwide and attracted the noted cryptozoologist Ivan Sanderson to investigate. Sanderson told the story in detail in his book *Abominable Snowmen: Legend Come to Life*. He described Wallace, who was righteously upset about the meddling monsters' interference with his contracts, as "hard-boiled and pragmatic . . . a professional skeptic"—hardly my impression.

Later Ray became involved with Tom Slick's Pacific Northwest Bigfoot Expedition of 1960, bringing in a couple of trackers with dogs. Always on the lookout for opportunities, whether in timber, minerals, or monsters, he and his partners offered Slick's operatives a look at a captive Bigfoot for cash up front. When they asked to see the animal first, Wallace claimed it had sickened and been released.

Ray's hearing has been damaged by constant bulldozer work, and he tends to speak loudly. Much of what he bellowed to me, punctuated by dawg-gone's, had to do with saucers and giants. He played a record he had helped to produce, an LP of ballads by a Johnny Cash–type country singer named Don Jones. Cut in Nashville, the disk included a Bigfoot song mixed with Bigfoot screams that Ray had taped by lowering a microphone into a hole he'd dynamited out around a trapped Sasquatch. The high-pitched shrieks could have been anything, but Ray maintained that a "government counter-intelligence machine . . . declared these

screams to be no sound of any known animal in the world today."

The LP jacket photo, taken by Ray and clearly staged, showed a Bigfoot and a mountain lion placidly sitting together after sharing a deer kill. The Bigfoot was saying "Zuki, zuki" to the puma, which is what you're supposed to say to pacify giants. Bigfoot runs with cougars and bears, Ray said. He once told Bob Titmus, a noted Bigfoot tracker and taxidermist, who was tanning cougar hides, "You shouldn't kill Bigfoot's pets."

As hokey as Ray's pictures were, he called the Patterson-Gimlin film a fake: "I know exactly which Yakama Indian was in that monkey suit," he said. He also claimed Patterson, "a cagey guy," stole his screams. The record played on: "Scientists call him the missing link, some people think he is extinct." Ray said the single "got down to number ten on the scale of things . . . ten more points and we'd 'a' got a gold record." It used to be for sale in a shop called Cowlitz Landing, where Ray's writings could also be had in a tabloid of the same name. "You could hear it there too," he said. "But that dawg-gone nickelodeon durn near wore it out."

Elna Wallace came in to turn down the record and asked me to stay for dinner. She did not seem amused that yet another Bigfoot buff was egging her husband on. Then Ray told me about a diary he'd bought written by early California gold miners, red-hot with Bigfoot stories. He was sure a movie would be made of the book, once it was written. If I'd write it, he offered, I could have a half interest. I steered the topic back to Bigfoot. "I've fergot more about Bigfoot than most people ever knew," he said. "I worked where they lived. You don't move fast around 'em when they're standin' there with a dawg-gone rock in each hand."

Ray doesn't claim to have been attacked by a Bigfoot, but he has been hurt in the woods. He broke his back when a whistle punk (signal man) screwed up, then wore a body cast while he set chokers for four months. In a bad crummy (crew bus) wreck, he broke his hip, "three lombards," five ribs, and a knee. But he was cured by an Assembly of God preacher overnight. He also puts stock in "choirpractors," raw garlic, and lemon juice, which cured his arthritis in two weeks.

Before I left, Ray told me that he actually believed that the Bigfeet were aborigines wearing bearskins. This didn't square with his pictures or the reputed dimensions, but consistency did not seem to be a major roadblock for Ray. According to folks I talked with on the Hoopa Reservation who remembered him, it never has been. There are those, in fact, who believe that Ray began the entire series of modern northern California episodes himself. He appeared on the

scene immediately after the tracks were found near Willow Creek. And he says he knows who was in the "monkey suit" at Bluff Creek when the Patterson-Gimlin film was made.

Perhaps Ray has seen something, perhaps he hasn't. But of course he is without credibility in the Bigfoot world. The serious searchers will be surprised that I have spent so much space on him. Yet by himself Ray Wallace embodies the diversity of traits found throughout the guild: intelligence, cleverness, cupidity, guile, wit, judgmentalism, hyperbole, and genuine curiosity. It is clear that he once had the latter, even if it has since been bulldozed under his own mountains of bullshit. He was a significant figure in the early-sixties stories out of California, and he has popped up in Bigfoot lore ever since.

Driving out of town, I was stopped by a policeman for having a taillight out. He turned out to be a former student of mine, and I asked him about Wallace. Ray had donated the land for the town high school, the young officer said; he was "a pillar of the community."

On my way out, Ray had kindly handed me the concretion. He hadn't a clue where they came from, but he knew they were "Bigfoot's bullets." And then he gave me one thing more. With the winning, confiding smile that Sanderson had noted, this bulldozer of a man winked at me and said, "Don't waste your time looking for Bigfoot."

——

Who are the "major players," the serious Bigfoot searchers I referred to? Six names come chiefly to mind: Ivan Sanderson, Bernard Heuvelmans, John Green, René Dahinden, Peter Byrne, and Grover Krantz. Bob Titmus could be added to the list, but he has not been recently active. One cannot take a close look at the North American hairy giant without taking each of these men into account. The late Sanderson was a prolific author of natural history and long the world's leading student and raconteur of animal mysteries. Heuvelmans, a much-respected Belgian zoologist and "the father of cryptozoology," wrote the encyclopedic *On the Track of Unknown Animals*. Green, Dahinden, and Byrne are the leading trackers in North America. Green and Dahinden will have nothing to do with Byrne, and they have not spoken to each other for fifteen years; Byrne advocates a more collegial approach.

It was Byrne whom I had met at his Bigfoot Information Center in 1975 and

had subsequently brought to Yale for the seminar that turned several academic heads. Byrne, born in Ireland, became a tea planter in India, then a tiger hunter and safari guide. Most of his kills, he told me, were to finish off wounded animals left by his drunken and idiot clients. Later, convinced of the need to protect the wildlife he had formerly tracked to shoot, he helped found the International Wildlife Conservation Society and originated Nepal's first tiger preserve. He recently assisted with a water project there.

As early as 1948 Byrne found a possible Yeti track in Sikkim and began searching for the maker. Ten years later he was recruited to the Himalayan Yeti expedition supported by the charismatic and much-loved Texas oil heir Tom Slick, who was influenced by Heuvelmans's book to pursue the elusive snowman. Byrne proved instrumental in having part of a possible Yeti hand shipped from Nepal to England in the lingerie case belonging to the wife of the willing (and amused) actor Jimmy Stewart, who had been visiting a maharaja. It proved to be human. Later Byrne was summoned by Slick to California to head up the Pacific Northwest Expedition, on the heels of the Willow Creek footprint findings.

It was in this period that much of the current animosity originated. Byrne, Dahinden, Green, Titmus, and Wallace were all involved in the expedition, at Slick's expense. The friction of egos and the resentments spawned then have never quite healed. Canadians Dahinden and Green (still speaking at that time) couldn't tolerate having the young Irish-Brit in charge. They hied themselves back to British Columbia to carry out a satellite investigation for Slick. And then, on October 6, 1962, Slick was killed in the crash of a light aircraft. All the expeditions he had supported came to an abrupt halt, and the Sasquatch search's one strong bonding influence evaporated. Byrne returned to Nepal and led river expeditions out of Katmandu, among other activities, for the next few years. He recalled that his first American period was bracketed by a pair of eerily connected events: hearing Marilyn Monroe sing "Happy Birthday" to Jack Kennedy at Madison Square Garden when he first arrived; then, back in the Nepalese bush, hearing of JFK's death from a village big man, who told him, "Your Big Man has died."

In 1971 Byrne, back in the States, founded the Bigfoot Information Center in The Dalles. He and Dede Killeen edited *The Bigfoot News*, a mother lode of information. In 1975 he published the best campfire read of all the Bigfoot books, *The Search for Bigfoot: Monster, Myth, or Man* (foreword by Jimmy Stewart). In 1979 Byrne and Killeen suspended the project and returned to Nepal

and India to work on Asian elephant conservation. In 1991 Byrne's *Tula Hatti: The Last Great Elephant* was published. Back in Oregon, Peter's interest in Bigfoot was rekindled, and he founded the Bigfoot Research Project in 1992.

Well funded by the Academy of Applied Science of Boston, the Project is described as "a benign, scientific investigation designed to prove the existence of a large, bipedal, hair-covered hominid believed to be living in the forested mountain ranges of the Pacific Northwest." With a staff of three, equipped with four-wheel-drive Blazers and Bell Jet Ranger helicopters; sophisticated computers and software designed for tracking serial killers; digital global positioning equipment; motion, sound, and heat sensors; radios, cellular phones, and night-vision scopes; and a widely known contact line (1-800-BIGFOOT), Byrne feels he is finally poised to find the animal if it exists. But rather than raking the countryside, as he did in his youth, he is concentrating on computer analysis of his database to construct what he calls "geo-time patterns"—integrative models that will predict where and when Sasquatch is most likely to occur. Then, he believes, the team can go forth into the field with a much greater likelihood of success. The full-time team includes Tod Deery, director of field activities, and office manager Deborah Wolman, who copes with the many serious, flaky, and obscene calls on the 800 line.

Byrne is the object of resentment by the other big names for several reasons. His suave and handsome appearance, enhanced by his Oxbridge accent, pressed khakis, sweat-stained safari hat, and silk cravat they see as a pose to further oil his considerable charm. That a young foreigner would have a position of leadership in Tom Slick's California operation never sat well with the others. His unorthodox conclusions—that Bigfoot is shorter than often stated, quite intelligent, and entirely unthreatening—contradict their own. His insistence on a peaceful approach to the creature, eschewing guns and attempting contact and communication, strike the other searchers as unrealistic, sanctimonious, and troublesome for their own methods. He further makes them look bad by (at least in public) rising above the disputes, taking the high road, and pleading for cooperation, while they kvetch and point fingers.

Under the title "Carpe Diem" in a recent *Track Record*, Byrne wrote that "Bigfooters, especially those who tend to spend time in the rascally and useless trade of chastising their competitors, would do well to keep the time factor of their trade in mind." He goes on to state that "we are literally no further forward than we were when Tom Slick and his merry men . . . were scrambling up and down the pineclad slopes of the Six Rivers National Forest, the rugged

mountains of the Trinity Alps and the dark ravines of the Marble Mountain Wilderness." In other words, let's get with it, chaps!

The greatest source of resentment against Byrne and his undertakings, however, must be his substantial financial support. Not since Tom Slick, who was devoted to Byrne and vice versa, has there been a financial angel for Bigfoot research like the current Academy of Applied Sciences commitment. Sasquatch hunters have been notoriously poor, always scratching for money for gas and plaster. Bob Titmus worked as a taxi-driving taxidermist in Kitimat. Roger Patterson promoted his film through public appearances, multiple rights sales, and any other way he could (Robert Gimlin is said to have never profited from it). The entire field has scrambled for cash, so it is understandable that Byrne's success (again) at gaining sponsorship would rankle. Then there are charges of dishonesty and double-dealing—but in this poison-pen fraternity I look at all personal attacks with as much skepticism as I apply to sightings of hairy monsters.

In spite of the calumny I have heard, I like Peter, as do most people who are not his rivals. And I don't think I'm just charmed by the khaki and the accent. I've known plenty of two-bit expatriates, has-been white hunters in tropical tuxedos, left behind by the Raj or its equivalents in some steamy outpost, living on image and foreign aid. Peter isn't one of them. I take him for a committed conservationist, a fine writer, and a genuine gentleman explorer, a species as rare today as any Yeti. He may take some shortcuts on the way to knowledge, but he has a better chance of getting there than most, and not just because of his bankroll.

I have yet to share a campfire with him, but we have sat around fireplaces in both our homes, sharing good ale, chenin blanc, or single-malt whisky, trading tales from Nepal or New Guinea, comparing signatures of Tenzing Norgay—his from personal correspondence, mine an autograph garnered in my grandmother's postwar rambles. Our conversation tends to focus on the possible phylogeny of wild men and on how they might be contacted and how conserved. I've seldom heard Byrne utter an unkind word about his colleagues. He respects Krantz, though he disagrees with him about killing a specimen. Once Ray Wallace's name came up, and Peter called him a nice and good fellow. "But he's a joker," he said, recalling certain incidents from the Slick era involving an alleged trapped animal and a demand for more money for Frosted Flakes to feed it. "Don't waste your time with guys like Ray." How oddly this echoed Ray Wallace's own words to me, "Don't waste your time looking for Bigfoot."

——

In May of 1994 I attended Sasquatch Daze at Harrison Hot Springs, a mountain resort town in British Columbia's Fraser River Valley. This annual event capitalizes on the area's long history of Bigfoot associations, which were first written about by J. W. Burns, a teacher on the Chehalis Indian Reserve in the twenties and thirties. His articles popularized the name "Sasquatch" and brought notoriety to the region, leading to the first Sasquatch festivals. In 1959, for British Columbia's centennial, a "Sasquatch Hunt" was mooted, then dropped. As John Green wrote, "Perhaps never before has a tourist resort achieved such publicity without actually doing anything."

The modern Sasquatch Daze, including art exhibits, Bigfoot races, and a series of forums, is an attempt to build on the town's old reputation to enhance tourism while throwing light on the Sasquatch mystery. Steve Harvey, the beleaguered organizer, was troubled by the weather, which had turned cool and rainy after a banner weekend for Canada's Memorial Day. The town was nearly deserted when I arrived, the usually thronged promenade wet and lonely, the lake undisturbed except by wind. Inside the massive old Harrison Hot Springs Hotel, however, the forum was well attended. Mostly by males—the only women present were wives and friends of Bigfooters, a trio of Bigfoot promoters from Elma, Washington, and a couple of tanned and scented blown dandelions on vacation who had just dropped in: "We're into the supernatural, Bigfoot, all of it," said Shirley.

I took a seat in the back of the room. The first speaker, freelance zoologist John Bindernagel, related his own track finding and explained that his experience made others feel free to tell him of their own. He thinks that many wildlife agency employees privately believe but are afraid to speak up. Bonnie West of Elma agreed. "When I placed an ad calling for Sasquatch experiences," she said, "I was overwhelmed . . . two to four calls came in daily." Her booklet, *Bigfoot! He's Still Out There*, relates the sightings of a sheriff, a policeman, some moms, loggers, and a woodsman named Tall Tom.

A spirited discussion followed about certain recorded calls and sounds well known among those present, which a morose fellow behind me said with no ifs, ands, or buts were the noises of hogs and coyotes. Another tape was played, and a gruff voice from a man in a plaid jacket in the back said, "We know where that tape came from—Ray Wallace!" "Trash, then," someone responded.

The next talk, “The Muddy Whites of Their Eyes,” was given by Donald Hepworth, an Englishman who works in animal welfare in Canada. Traveling through Idaho, he watched a pair of young Bigfeet climb a bank. In the dusk he took them at first for “Negro children.” One was clearly female, he said, and someone asked if her breasts were pendulous and drooping, as in the Patterson film. “No problem there,” he replied. “They were really quite firm and perky.” When pressed, he said he was used to seeing women equestrians and noting their figures beneath all the riding gear.

The compact, crouching form of Danny Perez sprang up and doggedly attacked the Englishman’s report on several points. A tall, spare man who had been quiet pulled him off, saying that Mr. Hepworth sounded to him like a good observer and that either he was a liar or he had seen two Sasquatch where he said he had. Hepworth went on to suggest that Bigfoot was an underutilized natural resource, and he proposed Sasquatch safaris to employ displaced loggers. I was reflecting on how well this would go down in my depressed loggers’ town when Sally Newberry, who plans her own Bigfoot festival for the diminished timber village of Elma, announced that her travel agency intends to conduct expeditions into the Olympic Mountains to see sites of Bigfoot encounters.

As this was being digested, Perez barked back, demanding to know what experience Hepworth had with primates. Hepworth replied that as an SPCA inspector he had rescued a gorilla. “Its owner dined in the nude with the gorilla,” he said, “while watching roller derby.” Hepworth confiscated and nursed the gorilla, but it died, “probably killed with rat poison by the owner’s psychiatrist boyfriend.” So this is Sasquatch Daze, I thought, and settled in.

The bitchiness at Harrison Hot Springs is nothing new. When the International Society of Cryptozoology held a Bigfoot symposium in Pullman, Washington, in 1989, their newsletter described the results as “colorful.” But the *High Country News* headlined it “Bigfoot Researchers Go Ape,” and the *Longview Daily News* described it as a “big flop meeting.” The “colorful” incidents included death threats, an arrest, a night in jail, a restraining order, and a shadow meeting held in a motel room by the “flakes” (paranormal types), who were not allowed to raise their concerns at the meeting. An anthropologist was admitted after agreeing to keep mum about his earlier assertion that three Yetis had astrally projected themselves into his Milwaukee bedroom. Danny Perez ranted, Paul Freeman walked out in protest of all the backstabbing (and of his own dismissal by many as a hoaxer), and Grover Krantz struggled for decorum—all par for the course in a field described by ISC member Forrest Wood as “characterized by

much bickering, feuding, and backbiting."

——

The ones I'd really come to hear were the man in the plaid jacket and the tall, spare man, John Green. At the break I managed to speak with Green, one of the famous Sasquatch-hunter residents of Harrison Hot Springs (the other is Bob Titmus), as well as its former mayor. Probably the most prolific writer on the subject and holder of the largest database, Green is considered Mr. Sasquatch by many. He was a journalist and publisher of the weekly *Agassiz-Harrison Advance* at the time of the 1950s goings-on in California. After getting in on Slick's expeditions there and in B.C., and later following up on Patterson's film, he continued his investigations in Canada.

John Green was holding forth on one of his favorite themes, the stubborn failure of science to address Sasquatch. "A serious university or wildlife agency research effort would be win-win, whether they found it or not," he maintained. "Why doesn't it occur? Because our science is based on either/or and cannot afford to take chances on a perception of 'maybe.'" But, he said, scientists often do take that chance on other matters. Besides, the parsimonious interpretation—that the beast exists—is clearly better than the alternatives, such as a widespread and elaborate hoax.

Green doesn't talk with the Indians much anymore, partly because they don't distinguish between concrete and other realities. Nor does he talk with Peter Byrne or René Dahinden. He claims that Byrne is a con man who will say anything for financial support and use his information in any way that supports his preformed conclusions. Yet when Green described his hopes, they sounded curiously like Peter's. By computerizing his many reported events (examples of which appear in *Bigfoot: On the Track of Sasquatch* and his other books), he hopes to enable others to see patterns and apply them to their disciplines. His interest in the where/when/why of the animal sounded much like Byrne's geo-time patterns, and I wondered whether this might be a source of their enmity. He said he could not use Byrne's data because he couldn't count on their accuracy, though others have found Byrne to be very cautious in accepting reports, one of the traits that impressed the scientists at Yale.

As for Krantz, who was also at Harrison, Green said he was "gullible" but clearly liked him. Ray Wallace, he said, was either "bats or having a hell of a

good time, telling anything and believing nothing." The real Bigfoot hunter, according to John Green, was his neighbor Bob Titmus, who was too ill to attend. Titmus is an expert hunter and tracker with a splendid array of casts, all of which he has taken himself. (Much of Titmus's fieldwork was carried out in the Kitimat district, not far from the scene of Billy Hall's story of the Kitlope Bigfeet.) The primary splits in the field, Green said, are "kill/no kill" and "share/no share"; the latter is one of the sources of his celebrated schism with Dahinden. Green claimed that what René cares about is who finds Bigfoot, and it had better be him. So when Green shares data with people who haven't "earned" the right, he angers Dahinden.

Green said, convincingly, that his circumstances were such that he could walk away from Bigfoot tomorrow without losing anything other than a matter of interest to him. He is not invested in personally making the discovery, at least not in the way that Dahinden (and many of the others) seem to be. I believed him. I had known this face—combed-back, wavy silver hair; deep expressive wrinkles around tired, intense eyes; and a hard, thin, but not unfriendly smile—in a younger form, looking out handsomely from the jackets of his books of the seventies. It impressed me as the face of a man with a certain rigidity, born of long embattlement, but also with an authenticity of spirit. If that spirit is not equally generous toward all of his former coworkers on the Slick expeditions, I suppose he has his reasons. Clearly the hero of this meeting, he is nonetheless exactly what he claims Sasquatch is not and will never be—deeply and obviously human, for better and for worse.

As John Green and I parted, the man in the plaid jacket strode past, sucking on a pipe and looking straight ahead. It was Dahinden, Green's former field companion and close collaborator in the early studies. Shortly after my Guggenheim Fellowship was announced in 1989, I received an evening telephone call from a man with a strong, gruff European accent. Identifying himself as René Dahinden from Canada, he wanted to know if I was on to something and what my plans were. I assured him I did not plan to look directly for Sasquatch, and he soon rang off.

Having read about Dahinden, I felt I was looking straight at him when I saw the movie *Harry and the Hendersons*, in which a dedicated and well-armed Bigfoot hunter is parodied. Now I was standing with René under a roofed kiosk, watching the Bigfoot races in the rain. A team comprising the good people of Elma, where rain is the usual state of affairs, was undeterred, but the group was having a hard time coordinating the four-person feet and was losing soundly to

the Canadians.

Dahinden is a tough, compact man, stocky but trim. He wore a blue short-sleeved shirt that showed arms still well muscled when he doffed his lumberjack plaid to look for matches, a navy T-shirt, and worn blue jeans. He too had gone gray since the Tom Slick expedition. Raised in Switzerland, René came to Canada in 1952 and heard about Sasquatch from a farmer who employed him. He has been on the track ever since. Many of his findings are colorfully reported in his book *Sasquatch: The Search for North America's Incredible Creature*, written with Don Hunter. Unlike many others, he proclaims his skepticism. "How do I know it's out there?" he asks. "I've never seen one."

Dahinden, with his jowly red face and short hair that looks trimmed with lawn clippers, has an impish demeanor, but his talk at Harrison Hot Springs was salty and dismissive: "I'm telling some of the people in this room," he said, "that they'd better learn about footprints, or they should just take their buckets and play in the sand." He has no patience for hoaxers: "We'll all get thrown in the same damn pot with morons and their damn fakes." He is irritated with those who give credence to what he sees as obvious hoaxes, as he believes Green, Byrne, and Krantz did in certain Washington State cases at Bossburg and Walla Walla. "Why fuck around with that shit when you've got a big case somewhere else?" he spurted. He interviews everyone he can and bases his strong opinions on a combination of exhaustive knowledge and hunches that "hit him in the head." A bombastic elder gnome, he is both respected and resented for saying exactly what he thinks.

René laughed and cursed over the peccadilloes of forty years spent on the spotty trail of what might be a wraith. He of course has opinions on all the others. As he has written, "The search for the Sasquatch is a bit like looking for the Holy Grail, except that it is performed by very unholy people." He blames John Green for mistakes in interpreting the Patterson film, but he doesn't let himself off either. After Patterson died, "We did so many dumb things." This unleashed a bleak soliloquy on Dahinden's interest in that storied strip. He acquired rights to the film, but having failed to ask the right questions at the time, he and Green had to rely on Gimlin's word. A convoluted and vicious course landed him in a legal and financial morass involving Gimlin, Patterson's widow, and many others. I got the feeling that Dahinden would much rather have spent the time searching for Bigfoot, but the grail was elusive and the film was there. It wouldn't be the first time celluloid had stood in for flesh and blood.

Dahinden chuckled at the races, pipe smoke swirling through his gappy teeth,

and pointed out an osprey overhead. His eyes lingered on the high valleys where he'd spent happier, younger days. When he came back, I asked him what finding Sasquatch would really mean to him. Puck spoke up through a wide smile: "I'd appoint myself Bigfoot's attorney and spokesman. We'd go to the government and say Bigfoot was there first, according to the Indians. They drove him out, and now we'd demand they throw the fuckin' Indians off the reserves so he could go home!"

He looked weathered by the rain that now came hard, but he was far from finished. As he said in his book, "I just have to keep on going—and I will do—until one of these creatures is found, dead or alive."

Sasquatch Daze was winding down. The folks from Elma spoke better than they raced. Fred Bradshaw, a jovial retired police officer, recounted his impressive encounter with a huge upright creature in the southern Olympics whose odor burned his nose, "like feces and sweat." Then Robert Milner gave accounts from the Rockies and played videotapes of interviews, though the one of a person who was under the influence of *Psilocybe* mushrooms at the time of his experience did not inspire confidence.

Scott Herriott, a professional stand-up comic, told of an encounter with a Bigfoot near Willow Creek. It had bioluminescent eyes "as red as the light on the camcorder" that didn't get used because his companion was weeping with fear. They said, "Soka, soka," to the beast, á la the famous Sasquatch abductee Albert Ostman, and I recalled Ray Wallace's "Zuki, zuki," which he said he had learned from a Yurok. Herriott finished with part of his comedy routine, which was received better than the straight part.

Next came the small, bearded Danny Perez, who wanted to know why hadn't Herriott carried a gun and blasted the thing? Danny's talk, though histrionic, was interesting, and his main premise—that we are conditioned to think that something that cannot exist does not exist—was apt. After saying a few rude things about his collaborators and avowing his lack of respect for credentials and books, he announced that he planned to publish a book of his own in 2000, "because I get a kick out of this." He admitted that he is "blunt and nasty for accuracy's sake," and that he discounted certain Russian reports, partly because "my contact was an asshole." Then he returned to his attack on poor Donald Hepworth questioning his reliability because he'd been married twice.

Grover Krantz took the podium to speak on the challenge of what to do if one actually had a specimen, qualifying his comments (and getting a laugh) by saying he might not be reliable since he'd been married four times. Even those

who disagreed with the idea of taking a specimen were intrigued by the challenge of what to do with three hundred to five hundred pounds of rotting flesh that smells bad to start with and that represents a scientific H-bomb, a huge media honeypot, and a legal tar baby.

The group dispersed. All the worthy hunters went their ways to imagine their answers to the questions Grover had raised; to watch for red eyes and black shadows as they drove the rainy roads; to picture their canonization or enrichment or apotheosis or honorary degrees, should they be the lucky one; to suck on their resentments and beefs and blandishments like so many sore teeth. I settled into a long wet drive back to Gray's River, where John Green, René Dahinden, and Grover Krantz were but names on a sagging bookshelf.

I found myself thinking about the taxonomy of Bigfoot hunters Krantz presents in *Big Footprints*. He recognizes five categories: hard-core hunters, novices, tranquilizers, recorders, and "professionals."

The hard-core hunters are after a body or, more specifically, the first body, because as Krantz says, "There will be no second prize." He discerns four main motives: fame, money, personal vindication, and scientific knowledge. Given the stakes, he feels it is entirely natural that little sharing and lots of prevarication go on. The novices, he believes, are naively bumbling along in the belief that they will find a Bigfoot and that the world will happily believe them. They either graduate to another category or drop out of the search. Tranquilizers want to capture an animal for proof and study but believe it should be done with tranquilizing darts instead of bullets. Krantz gives a reasoned argument of the impracticability of this approach, which is based, he says, on a dramatically false set of assumptions.

The recorders gather information and, not being hunters, usually distribute it freely. Their data vary widely in quality, and some really collect accounts the way others might collect stamps. They publish periodicals such as the *Track Record*, *BigfooTimes*, the *Monthly Bigfoot Report*, the *Bigfoot Record*, and dozens more. A few recorders become chroniclers, chief among them Green, Heuvelmans, and Sanderson; one, Perez, has produced a "respectable" bibliography. Krantz eliminates all those who mix UFO and paranormal information with hominoid reports as irrelevant or in the category of wackos and what he calls the "lunatic fringe."

Grover's final (and least favorite) group are those he calls "professionals." These investigators, he maintains, "do not want the sasquatch to be proven to exist." They have made a profession, or at least a reputation, based on the beast

and stand to lose their standing (and, for some, their livelihood) when it is found. This group can include the UFO/supernatural types if those themes further their purposes; in other words, they are calculating opportunists. Some "professionals" are simply out for any publicity, something real Sasquatch investigators try to avoid whenever possible unless it might advance the search.

Krantz's nomenclature is a helpful accounting of the types and motives of these wraith-trackers, but it leaves out the academics and scientists who have taken a serious interest, such as himself. Since virtually all the other investigators scorn mysterious and monolithic "Science" for its uninterest, those scientists who pay attention deserve special note. Nor does Krantz's list account for serious investigators who disavow the use of guns or darts.

Perhaps another subspecies should be recognized: those who root around for big apes in less likely (because they are open or densely populated) areas such as Iowa, South Dakota, and New Jersey—as some people do, nearly full-time. And an appendix might note the range of day jobs held by these night watchers: a physicist in New York, an environmental planner for a Washington tribe, a carpenter in Michigan, an Omaha English teacher, college students in Indiana, an electrician from Bremerton, a pycnogonist (sea-spider specialist) employed by a primate laboratory . . . there seem to be no demographic limits to the field except, apparently, gender. And there are more of them than anyone might suppose.

I have several times been approached by men mad for Sasquatch who in their driven fervor seem to fall outside all categories. One of these was Ken, who called me from the local store one autumn afternoon. I brought him home and talked Bigfoot with him over an ale. A big, paunchy man of fifty-two, he wore a plaid poly shirt open to sweaty black chest hair; his green poly pants shed threads where they'd been shortened. The Goodwill effect was warranted: a broke Texan, he'd just driven down from Alaska in an old truck with a U-Haul trailer attached with a homemade hitch. The expression on his creased, shaven face flickered between speculation, obsession, and exhaustion. He was tired of getting "Mexican wages" working construction. One good photograph, he said, and he'd have it made.

Ken's Indian girlfriend in Alaska had seen a Sasquatch at Iliamna when she was five. He'd been up there, spending eighty dollars a day at a lodge, going broke and weary. He figured that by following leads he could find it; had just returned from a fruitless look around Mount St Helens; hoped I could give him some tips. I wanted to shake him and tell him to get a life, or a job. I did the next

best thing: I told him to go see Ray Wallace. I wasn't sure if it was unkind, and if so, to which one? But I figured they'd have fun, and if Ken was lucky maybe Ray would give him the same advice he'd given me.

——

So what is it, finally, that drives this compulsion to associate with monsters? To give up jobs, homes, sometimes wife and family (as René chose to do after his wife gave him an ultimatum), for a date with frustration? Is this passionate pursuit mainly a matter of looking for the main chance? Clearly fortune is an important lure, as is true for Ken. For others, notoriety: René told me he would have liked to play the Sasquatch hunter in *Harry and the Hendersons*, and he didn't mind a bit if the character was modeled on him. One of the other speakers at Harrison, Cliff Crook, had been humiliated as a boy by his father for telling about an ape encounter; his hangdog demeanor and hurt tone, as well as his words, suggested he'd been trying to vindicate himself in his father's eyes ever since, even though Dad was no longer around to prove it to. Cliff uses the bitter memory to fuel his Bigfoot Central, an investigation center in Bothell, Washington.

Danny Perez said he got a kick out of the search, and this motivation may be closer to the mark than most excuses. Almost all the hunters recall a time, often in their adolescence while reading Sanderson or Green or watching the Patterson film or some hokey Yeti movie on TV, when they were "grabbed" by Bigfoot—like the unhappy camper snatched by the beast from his fireside in Teddy Roosevelt's gruesome tale. Whatever the root cause, hundreds and maybe thousands of men have chosen to gamble family and livelihood, respect and reputation, even their very sanity, in pursuit of a prize that might not even exist.

If there is one common trait among this odd bunch, it is that they all belong to the species Roger Patterson called "the eternal individualist." And if they share a single urge, I think I discovered it during another talk at the forum in Harrison Hot Springs. The speaker was Jim Hewkin, a retired fish and game professional from Oregon. He spoke about Sasquatch as a real animal with real needs and traits. In his camel sweater, dress shirt, and pressed slacks, Hewkin looked the part of the genial grandpa. But his voice was that of a man who has spent much of his time out of doors in rugged situations—the same kinds of places that Bigfoot loves. His talk took on an incantatory tone, and the account became a

beguiling litany of beasthood:

"He's a monster, he'll eat anything, alive, dead, fresh, rotten . . . He's a survivor . . . mobile, quick, fast, and strong . . . Anybody who sees a slow Sasquatch is not in the ball park . . . He's got no limits, climbs any mountain, swims any river. He's got no barriers . . . Not an endangered species, that's us . . . He can pull down big game on the run or by stealth, like a cougar . . .
He can lay down a light track or spring like a deer . . . Has a lot of humor, yet restraint . . . Rocks cars and cabins, but lets folks go . . . We agonize, he couldn't care less . . . An opportunist at the top of the food chain, in great shape—he's got it made! Adapted to the cutover lands, lives a good rugged existence . . . He's got no need for wages, lives off the fat of the land, and pays no taxes!"

The room was hypnotized.

And suddenly I realized: these guys don't want to find Bigfoot—they want to *be* Bigfoot.

# IV

# FOOTSTEPS ON THE WIND

# 17

# Lost in the Big Lava Bed

*Stuck in the ruts to the who knows where . . .*
—Jack Gladstone, “The Roman Road”

When I left the foresters’ encampment at Trout Lake, I began the last formidable leg of the Dark Divide passage: the Big Lava Bed. When you cross the pine-and dogwood-strewn landscape of the Mount Adams country, dark hulks rear up and surprise you through the scrim of green. These are the lava deposits that flowed from dikes and pipes in the volcanic system, expelled from the magma pool that underlies everything here. Cooling, they froze into pillars and lobes and layers of stone. Now the jumbled basalt lies about like leftovers, a bowl of gelid black-bean chili overturned across the tableland.

Fall colors claimed the shelterwood along the forest roads, chiefly vine maple and dogwood in versions of vermilion. I took a detour, signposted NATURAL BRIDGES, through a mixed dwarfish forest of lodgepole and ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and larch, the larch going yellow. Mountain box and mountain balm wove the field layer; lemon-drop leaves of dogbane among kinnikinnick and long-blown beargrass made the ground layer.

The Natural Bridges of Klickitat County are superb landforms whose existence, a hundred miles from my home, I’d never guessed at. The formation consists of long, sinuous, open-roofed lava tubes, some thirty to eighty feet across from rim to rim, spanned by lava arches that look remarkably like ancient mossy human-built bridges in Cornwall. The tubes’ bottoms are bunched up with boulders from rockslides. One rim supports dry old forest; the other, recent Doug-fir plantation. In a bouldery hollow, vine maples billowed in a red swell like molten lava.

I ventured under the eaves of one bridge whose egress was plugged and found something I’d never seen before: moss stalactites, the wispy growths of two or three species of moss bonded together to form long inverted cones. Hundreds of these green icicles, some as long as six inches, drooped from the lintel. Some were blunt, others quite sharp, many web-slung. As a child I carried a passion for stalactites but a phobia for webs—finding these would have been a dilemma indeed. I had studied stalactites and stalagmites in every cave or limestone mine I could visit, and later, as a ranger-naturalist leading walks in Sequoia National

Park's ornate Crystal Cave, I reveled in them. But I had never heard of mosses gathering into long plaits at the dripping doorways of caves. Coming across a natural feature of which I've been utterly ignorant throws me. I wondered how long these all-moss formations had taken to grow and what they could tell me about who had come before.

Layers of lava sills one to six feet thick receded into the low cave. Greenish-pale lichens shone almost phosphorescent. Crinkly sheets of gray foliose lichens hung down like wings, and pale agaric mushrooms pushed up from below. One ruby-red and one bright yellow crinkled leaf lay before the entrance on the needled, mossy mud. The green curvy wands of the maples fended off would-be entrants. Old gray leaves lined the floor beneath the trees, whose living leaves were grass-green near the cave, butter in the shade, scarlet where they reached out into the canyon's sun. It was cool in the lichen-light, the vine maples' shade, the cave's gape.

But not quiet. People picnicked nearby. "That's a good buy, eight of these for a buck. Shoulda got twenty-four of 'em." Most of the visitors seemed preoccupied with getting the "best shot" of the bridges on their instant cameras. But that's interpretive sites for you. People don't come to these places to marvel at moss stalactites or to find silence. They're taking a break from jobs and television, malls and movies, and it's their forest as much as mine. Their method of enjoying it should not concern me. Still, I found myself shrinking into my cave, Grendel-like, thinking rude thoughts about people who discard filter tips willy-nilly and wishing someone would please bite the heads off these nice, yammering folks.

I retreated to the eastern end of the site. The biggest of maybe six or eight bridges was here, farther into the young plantation, where few would look. I heard two or three pikas among log-strewn boulders—a training ground for living in slash piles? But this was not just pika and golden-mantled ground squirrel habitat. There were several elegant Bigfoot dens—at least until the place became a logjam, a picnic spot, and a photo op.

Stumps of old-growth Douglas fir stood around, the culls dumped into the ravine, no doubt for the benefit of pikas (I reasoned ironically); why else would the Forest Service allow logging right up to the edge of a prime geological interpretive site and the dumping of logging waste into the middle of it?

——

Roads ring the Big Lava Bed, but none have been built into it farther than a long stone's throw. My plan was to spend a few days in the area, roaming its rim roads and venturing within wherever I could find a wormhole. I drove down the east side in the late afternoon. Dry Creek was double-dry; Lost Creek disappeared as promised. South Prairie, grassy openings with boggy bits and aspens on its western edges, hosted more cows than any other visible form of life.

Up under Little Huckleberry Mountain the road followed the very edge of the Big Lava Bed, all the way to the south end. Humpy lava poured right down to the verge. On foot I followed a hunter's trail a short way up and in, finding it very difficult to negotiate. The place was both incredibly beautiful, with vine maple glowing red in green grottoes, and incredibly rough, with holes and traps and turgid tongues of wicked dark rock poking everywhere.

This was no place for backpacking! I knew that I'd been wise (if cowardly—not an infrequent match) to choose several penetrations of the Big Lava Bed over a single long traverse. As the Gifford Pinchot Forest Plan says, "Due to its size and the roughness of terrain, exploring the Big Lava Bed requires initiative, independence, and stamina"; it is "infrequently explored by hikers"—both understatements.

That same document describes the Big Lava Bed as having been "formed by a relatively recent (less than thirty-five hundred years) volcanic eruption from a cone and crater which produced one or more flows of lava." An elevated lava platform near the crater of the big cinder cone, however, has been carbon-dated at eighty-one hundred years. The *Seattle Times* called the bed "one of the largest and most impressive sheets of recent lava in Washington" and said, "This waste of basaltic lava covers 12,500 acres . . . posed in a wild array of disorder and violence. About nine miles long, the bed varies in width from one to four miles."

The Forest Service once maintained two trails across narrow sections of the flow, linking fire lookouts, and strung a simple telephone line along the northern crossing. These were abandoned in the forties. Where I first poked my way in might have been the remains of the Little Huckleberry–Red Mountain telephone trail. The area has since been undisturbed except for a modest mineral claim in the southern end for ornamental lava and rare visits by hunters, botanists, and geologists. As the Forest Plan puts it, possibly indicating a bias, "recreation activities include hiking, hunting, sightseeing, hunting, and plant study."

The planners were also a little confused about the fauna of the area. "The lava flow and its vegetation are used," they wrote, "by a variety of rock-dwelling

insects and other mammals." Bigfoot has often been called a bugbear (*Webster's*: "an ogre, something that causes needless terror"), but never an insect. Perhaps the Forest Service has bugbears in mind when they speak of mammaliferous insects. Certainly the lava beds furnish niches, in both senses of the word, for many mammals *and* insects, and for at least one big hairy bugbear.

On the first day of October I made my way to a point where I figured I could penetrate the Big Lava Bed on its northwest flank. A red pumice face that had been quarried for gravel made a deep coral angle of repose by the road. It hinted at the complexity of the igneous history of the area, for anyone who thinks it's all just a uniform black-rock mess. I passed the pumice shortly before coming to Crest Camp, an old base for horse packers with hitching posts and a loading ramp. Here I was only about three miles from the Indian Racetrack in the southern extremity of Indian Heaven, near Red Mountain. It made me wonder whether the Indians who gathered for olallie and salmon and stories and horseracing up on the plateau, and who surely used Crest Camp too, ever spent much time in the lavaland to the south and east. With the thoroughly inviting open meadows of Indian Heaven so near, why would they want to?

A turkey vulture flew up from beside the road into a lichen-draped fir. I could see sky through its nostrils, see its hood—useful on this chilly morning—up around its bare and lurid neck. Extra lymph glands in their warty wattles lend vultures immunity against the septic substances they love. Investigating, I found the attraction—a road-killed coyote. It was fairly new, yet a mass of maggots writhed beneath its face, and it was very ripe to the nose. A rotting road-killed Bigfoot, which is supposed to smell horrible to start with, would take terrific dedication to deal with.

I drove to the top of a spur road off the eminence of Crest Camp. It should have offered a great view over the Big Lava Bed, but dense fog swiped the scene. Lots of logging loomed, and in the mists in the burned clear-cut below, lots of Bigfeet roamed, but all the apes had roots. A sign read LYNX EVALUATION PLANTATION COWLITZ TREE IMPROVEMENT CO-OP. ESTABLISHED 1988 BY WIND RIVER RANGER DISTRICT. FUNDING PROVIDED BY BATESVILLE CASKET CO. BATESVILLE, INDIANA. With a product like that in mind, this should be truly sustainable forestry. A second sign, with a routed tree design, noted SITE PREPARATION BY WIND RIVER FUELS CREW 1988.

The coffin-wood project bordered the Pacific Crest Trail on its far side. I planned to cross a low saddle to link with the trail, then follow it northerly to the edge of the lava bed. The firs whipped, cold mists blowing through their limber

tops, as I set out into the stormy woods.

The “saddle” seemed to be a steep hill of open second-growth hemlock with beargrass and bunchberry below. It made pleasant going at first, but the terrain rose more than the one contour line indicated on the USGS map. Then I plowed through some hundred yards of bucked-up blowdown, a bitch to cross, and emerged on a ridge, clear-cut on top.

I was way west of the lava bed, *not* where I wanted to be. I struggled through the clear-cut to a line signed “Boundary of Partial Cut,” which was none too partial. There I found a logging road and a boom landing that I certainly hadn’t expected. Juniper, hazel, and Rocky Mountain maple fuzzed a beautiful beargrassed ridge. When the sun came out, I felt hot and sweaty in my wool and Gore-Tex. The cold wind shifted into the treetops, and I hoped for no more windthrow today as I timber-bashed my way back down to the car by a guessed route that got me there.

I realized I had totally hosed up, taken the wrong “saddle,” and ended up in a logging-road system south and west of where I wanted to be. People say compasses don’t work well around the Big Lava Bed, and I was inclined to believe it. At least it made a convenient excuse for my poor orienteering.

From a spot a little farther along the road I could see the impressive crater in the north end of the Lava Bed. Orienting on it, I was able to find the true saddle, not far from my earlier takeoff. In three minutes I hopped over the low rise and landed on the Pacific Crest Trail on the edge of the lava.

Chilly wind and bright sun made a nice combo for exploring. The PCT runs along the Big Lava Bed for about two miles after dropping from the racetrack and before darting west toward Panther Creek. The land had been logged right down to the prime trail of the West; the trees in the little buffer area had, predictably, blown down, entailing much bucking for the trail crew and a not-so-pretty sight for hikers.

I worked my way maybe a mile into the bed, lit by late slanted beams. My feet found a very complex texture of broken basalt, sills, caves, chunks, boulders, layers, and screes; then I reached fairly flat terrain covered with dense, small lodgepole pines, giving way to grottoes, chasms, caved-in tubes, and bridges. There were no picnickers. Dark firs and pines contrasted with the deep reds of vine maple in crevices. Chipmunks worked a wonderland of lichens, mosses, creepers, and gone-over beargrass plumes. Porcupines stripped bark. Douglas squirrels took hermitage in grottoes lush green with moss. A pika sounded in the distance, over vague thunder. Coyotes, by their scat, gave away their endless

pursuit of the others. This place should truly be a pika paradise, unless Seeahtlk munches off their little harelike heads. There were geeks aplenty, but no nuthatches for harmony—a rare occasion for this trip, as was the utter absence of aircraft overhead.

Pileated woodpecker's rectangular sign showed in snags. Ravens ronked under an east-facing ledge. Under another overhang I found an enormous, four-foot pika haystack. Almost all beargrass, it really looked like hay, bound with a sprinkling of maple leaves and pine sprigs.

The bugaboo question, "What would Bigfoot eat?" comes up often in discussions of the animal's actuality. Biologists and hunters debate whether it should have a potbelly like a gorilla because it must eat so many greens, or whether it hunts or scavenges. Some state dogmatically that the ecosystem simply could not support another large forager, especially in winter.

But as I repeatedly found, large stores of foodstuffs filled the landscape—berries, mushrooms, small mammals, and so on—largely unexploited, getting ready to rot and recycle. As an ecologist I am not so sanguine in this matter as to believe that the land can support an infinite variety and number of consumers. Resource availability is indeed one of the major limiting factors in animal distribution. However, I saw plenty to suggest that a large, uncommon omnivore could find something to eat here more often than not. One of the menu items might be pikas.

In the fall of 1967 Glen Thomas, an Oregon timber worker, reported watching a family group of Bigfeet hunting small animals among rocks near Tarzan Springs in the Cascades above Estacada. The impressive hole dug by the male is still visible, according to members of the Western Bigfoot Society who made a recent field trip there. "He brought out what appeared to be a grass nest, possibly some stored hay that small rodents had stored there," according to Thomas, as quoted in John Green's book *On the Track of Sasquatch*. Then the mama, papa, and baby Bigfoot gobbled several of the unidentified "small rodents." Thomas was no mammalogist—Green quoted him as saying, "They ate it skin, feathers, and all." From the habitat and the hay, I would guess that the animals might have been pikas.

Peter Byrne visited the site in 1972 and found thirty or more holes where boulders weighing as much as 250 or 300 pounds had been dislodged. Marmots dwelled among the rocks. It would certainly be easier to catch a deep-sleeping woodchuck than a wide-awake pika. Bigfoot would have to be fast to grab the skittering creature, all right, but perhaps a rock-popping Sasquatch can actually

pin a pika down. Others have reported such behavior both in granite rockslides and in basalt country.

Here in the lava bed the little lagomorphs have endless tunnels for escape, too small for any pursuer but a weasel. Yet the big haystack I found was under the rim of a large overhang, and an animal capable of negotiating the rocks better than I could probably find many such. Nice, fat, hay-fed pikas might even offer a resource specialization to primate dwellers of the stony black-lands. In this and other ways, the Big Lava Bed undermines the "nothing to eat" objection to Bigfoot, just as its many hidey-holes destroy the "no place to hide" fallacy.

You think you're making progress crossing this place. Then you come to unpassable arches and gaping maws, shadowed casts and lightless shafts, trap doors and detours. These many holes—how deep do they go? Marsha's four-foot handle easily went all the way down many. One black orifice led down to the center of the earth at least. Is Lost Creek really running somewhere down there, as local legend suggests, only to emerge at the south end?

My camera, set at a slow speed, went off like a cannon in the silence. It was five-thirty, darkening, my boots imbrued, the blue of juniper and firs going bluer. Crimson caps of British-soldier lichens spattered the rocks alongside vine-maple leaves, but most of the colors were somber now. I'd come as far as I felt I should.

Was I observed? It was easy to imagine it as I picked my way carefully through the minefield. I arrived back at the saddle trail at six, emerging into hemlocks and Douglas firs, which don't seem to grow in the lava bed, and a good big stand of native rhododendrons. Had I not misread the map I'd have had another two hours in the forbidding beds. But I'd had a good peek in and anticipated a deeper probe.

——

Instead of weathering the rigors of the Big Lava wilderness overnight, I took the easy hospitality of Stuart and Mildred Chapin in White Salmon. Mildred's family has a long history in the area, and Stuart was at that time a member of the Columbia River Gorge Commission, which oversees the management of the national scenic area. Because of the different visions of the various gorge interests, from hikers to lumber mills, fishermen to dam operators, wind surfers to barge companies, developers to the surviving Chinook and other Indians, a

place on the commission is a permanent hot seat. Stuart took the heat in good grace, and he and Mildred made their love of the big river abundantly clear in their big old house perched on one of the larger lava flows of the gorge.

In a snug room full of books and family pictures, I read most of a recent *Oregonian* series called *NW Forests: Day of Reckoning* by veteran forest reporter Kathy Durbin. The USFS had adopted the Jack Ward Thomas spotted-owl report, if obsequiously and temporarily. But four years later Durbin would be sacked by the newspaper's new owners, who were afraid of alienating powerful timber interests. For now, I was excited that the topic of future forests was receiving such a thorough look.

Laying the pulp aside and snuffing the light in my cozy den, I conjured up an image of the Big Lava Bed by night. Camping there would be a wild delight if you could find a flat spot for your tent. But I would not like to be lost and picking my way around after dark, when a broken ankle would be almost as likely as nightfall itself.

Over breakfast in the morning, Mildred told me of gathering small native cranberries in the South Prairie bogs for sauce at Thanksgiving. We enjoyed homegrown ripe tomatoes, hazelnuts, and chestnuts with conversation of forests and gorges, which led into Stuart's question: Could Sasquatch survive out there? I thought hard. Though still not coming to any conclusions on Bigfoot's physical existence, I felt I could answer yes in terms of the possibility of survival. Still. For a bit. If the timber plan works.

When Stuart asked me to expand on that, I said I had demonstrated to myself the abundance of wild food in these forests, at least in the fructuous fall. I mentioned my lepidopterist friend Karölis Bagdonas, who found that grizzly bears in the Rockies forage vast numbers of miller moths roosting among the talus; the fat-rich insects furnish a major part of the grizzlies' summer diet. Insect eating has not been widely reported for Bigfoot, but why not, especially during insect outbreaks? We know that chimps probe for termites with sticks.

I'd seen clearly that adequate, or generous, denning and hiding places survive, at least in the ancient deepwood and the Big Lava Bed. A fast-moving, deeply secretive, and reasonably smart ape could remain generally hidden. The not-infrequent sightings are evidence that it screws up now and then, as all animals do. Yes, the woods are big enough for Bigfoot. But fragmentation is its bête noir, and another couple of decades of road building and cutting like the past two could void that conclusion for me.

With no strong feelings about Bigfoot, Stuart and Mildred were open to my

ideas. From his efforts at guiding the Columbia Gorge between development and conservation interests, Stuart was well aware of the complexity of the ecological conditions I was posing for a potential ape. Their attitude was emblematic that the time was past when one could scarcely mention the subject of Bigfoot in sensible company without fear of derision.

Outside a fresh rain had put a rainbow over the gorge. The sun emerged, and we watched salmon-colored painted ladies nectar the zinnias of their butterfly garden, while crows and ravens arranged a field-guide page over the black cliffs. I took my leave, thankful for the fruits of the season, the comforts of a good home in a fine place, and an intelligent sounding board for thoughts too often held in solitary confinement.

——

The Little White Salmon road took me to Big Cedars County Park, where I recycled my coffee among fair-to middling-size arborvitae. A light rain fell. Perched under a cedar umbrella I realized it was almost time to head home. But I was fully in the thrall of the Big Lava Bed. I took one of the few short roads into the area and came soon into a scrub of manzanita, silk-tassel bush, ocean spray, mock orange, and cascara, tough shrubs that can take the rocky, well-drained "soils." The road ended in a clinker field softened by small ferns. Plant collectors had been there, leaving their sign of broken flower pots. A cold breeze wheezed under plumbeous skies. I continued on foot, intending to locate a roundish plain indicated on the maps to determine what it was. But I found that I'd left my compass back at the Chapins', and my sense of direction was on its own.

Back in White Salmon that morning I had wanted to pick up some Rainier Ale. The old gentleman of whom I'd asked directions to the state liquor store gave them to me clearly, then handed me a Southern Baptist gospel tract entitled *I will abstain*. About to enter the maze of the basalt boulder field without a compass, having just consumed a strong ale with lunch, I suspected he probably had the right idea.

The beds looked different here, with tall wild raspberries, mountain box, and elderberry. But as I left the clinkers, pines replaced the hemlocks and the terrain changed back to shelves and grottoes. The road had not, in fact, touched the interior. A narrower old track carried on a little farther to a sinkhole full of

water, the first I'd seen in the lava beds. A circle the size of a wading pool, it was rimmed with grass and duckweed and saxifrages. Water striders made clear dents in the surface with their six pontoon bubbles. Whirligigs too had found this remote oasis. A wild wind came up, bending the toothpick pines that looked fit for tepee poles alone.

Deer tracks registered in silty spots moist from rain, but the coyote scats were full not of fur but of the fine purple seeds of the raspberries. There were also Havoline and Prestone bottles, a back-road cliché, the plastic spoor of the idiot-mobile. Furry rosettes of a composite plant caught water poolettes. Away from the sinkhole a creature would have to be able to catch rainwater or know how to tap into the underground streams to slake its thirst. For an animal able to work the pipelines of the Big Lava Bed like a subway system, life here might be rewarding. I imagined an interstitial universe beneath my feet, populated by dim-sighted salamanders and waterbears.

At the end of the old haul road, I cut south to find the big open ellipse shown on the topo map. Moss stalactites grew here too, under the eaves of lava windows. At four o'clock I remembered that it was midnight in Berlin, and Germany was about to become one nation. What a different scene it would be at the Brandenburg Gate! Here too rose high stone arches, but I was the entire crowd. And these thick walls of basalt might stand forever, keeping no one in and almost everyone out.

Orange chanterelles trumpeted from damp moss patches. Some white chanterelles and a small cauliflower fungus showed up too, both uncommon delicacies, and big boletes raised their brown pelted caps. I plucked red huckleberries, sweet salal berries, and sour Oregon grapes. This stark space was not without its nourishment. But the salal foliage, a jade jungle, would not let me see the ground, making travel over lava mounds and mossy cobbles treacherous. It also signaled a change in the substrate.

I had made it to the map's oval, a slight depression with deeper soil and vegetation more like that of a "regular" forest—thick salal and bracken, pipsissewa, trillium, twinflower, Douglas fir, heavy maple, and a bit of white pine among the diminished lodgepoles. I believe it was an old lakebed. But it wasn't much more walkable than the jumble outside. Deadfalls and salal made crossing the oval almost as rigorous as picking through the lava fields. Without my compass, which might or might not have worked here, I navigated by the sun and my native sense of direction to get to the other side.

In a small, open stand of blue huckleberry lay some old bear poop. Bear

denning spots are unlimited here, if bears like rocks. Even people can learn to like rocks if that's all there is—ruins of Anasazi pueblos in the slickrock of the Southwest show this clearly. More recently a renegade band of Modoc Indians took up residence in a habitat not unlike the Big Lava Bed—except a lot drier and less vegetated.

As the Smithsonian's *Handbook of North American Indians*, volume 8, notes, some precontact Indians lived in "barren flows of lava. The edges of the geologically recent lava flows were important as hunting places for . . . marmots, an important food in spring; and they also served as fortifications or refuges for the local population."

The Modoc of California have a history with Bigfoot and with life among the rocks. Tawani Wakawa (as quoted in the *Bigfoot News*) told of his grandfather's first encounter with Matah Kagmi, as he called it, one evening in 1897 on a deer trail near Mount Shasta. "Grandfather made a motion of friendship and laid down the string of fish that he was carrying," Wakawa wrote. "The creature eventually understood this as it quickly snatched up the fish and struck out through the timber nearby."

"Let our motto be extermination, and death to all opposers," railed a Yreka, California, newspaper in 1854. White fervor to wipe out Indian opposition to their expansionist plans peaked with frequent genocidal raids on the Modocs and others. When the Modoc people were all consigned to a reservation on Klamath Lake, a band from the Lost River country to the south resisted. Settlers invaded their homeland, and troops came to force the last Modocs out. Under the leadership of Kintpuash, otherwise known as Captain Jack, the band resisted with arms, then retreated into what is now the Lava Beds National Monument, south of Tule Lake on the Oregon line. For the next seven months they lived like pikas among the rocks.

According to the *American Heritage Book of Indians*, Captain Jack's band "consisted of perhaps 250 men, women, and children, with perhaps 70 or 80 men of warrior age—most of the men were well-known to the whites, under such monikers as Humpy Jerry, Shack-nasty Jim, or Curly-headed Doctor." Somehow this community eked out a life among the hot rocks. I wouldn't be surprised if adept parties crept out to Tule Lake, returning with water, ducks, and other provender. But in the time they lived there the Modocs became the masters of the black badlands. "Attack after attack was trapped and shot to pieces in the nightmare lava beds," says *American Heritage*, "total Army casualties running to over 100 killed and wounded." When a peace talk took place, Captain Jack

(possibly suspecting a trap) turned on General E. R. S. Canby, army commander of the Department of the Columbia, and killed him. After that he wore Canby's uniform.

President Grant would have no more; he ordered General Sherman to bring Kintpuash out. Sherman, never accused of being an Indian lover, replied, "You will be fully justified in their utter extermination." Artillery was brought in, and the Modocs were shelled out of their lava hideout. Captain Jack and three others were hanged, and the rest were banished to a pestilent reserve in southeastern Oklahoma, where most soon died. Captain Jack's rebellion was doomed from the start, like all the other Native American acts of resistance. But for a time his followers lived independently in a wild labyrinth of lava.

I suppose that the natives around the Big Lava Bed knew its innards as well as Jack knew his lavalands. Some of the edges, as at South Prairie, furnish the resources of wet savannas anywhere. But given the rich plateaus north and east and the great river to the south, they mightn't have had a reason to explore the lava bed. At least they were never driven into the lava bed as a last resort. Had Captain Jack come here he would have found a land with fewer clues for orientation. Given the tumbled topography and the monotonous cover of pines, it is extremely hard to set a course and keep to it. You could walk around and around for days and never come out.

When I found my way to the far edge of the old lakebed, I did not know where I was. I could see no horizon and no sun under a sky that ran to blue holes and black patches. I wasn't unduly worried, but I was more than ever aware of the absence of my trusty Silva from its accustomed pocket. Searching my maps for clues that were not there, I rested on a squirrel midden that barely softened the lava. The chickaree-in-residence ran up a pine with a mushroom in its mouth. Around the edges of a blue and green moss-and-lichen fairyland of a crater sprawled the big nests of bushytail woodrats, spilling seeds and coppery manzanita sticks.

But my immediate concern was finding out where the hell I was. I knew I was only half a mile from a road on the northeast or southwest. But if I meandered roughly northwesterly, I could go almost ten miles without seeing any landmarks. The landforms outside, the mountains and ridges, ought to facilitate orientation, but frequently they were invisible through the forest cover. The big cinder cone was far to the north, and I wouldn't see it until I was on top of it. And it was nearing sunset. I hadn't carried bivouac equipment with me on this ramble so close to the can. I was beginning to see how one could become

stranded in a place where blind wandering at night could be fatal.

After another hour of deliberate forays this way and that, hoping for inspiration, I started to worry. What was the worst that could happen? Hypothermia was possible at two thousand feet in October, but I could probably fashion some sort of shelter to keep warm enough. My fat reserves were good for a month, if not a year, and there were plenty of berries and mushrooms and other plants to keep the edge off. With luck I might come across another sinkhole full of water, the lack of which debilitates the lost hiker much sooner than lack of food.

In short, not much would happen to me if I could prevent hypothermia. In time my absence would precipitate a search, and I would quickly be spotted by air or by search-and-rescue folks who knew the area. How embarrassing that would be, so close to the road. But embarrassment ceases to matter to those in jeopardy, like the moment in deep water when you finally swallow your pride and enough water to yell “Help!” if you still can.

As the day waned, dusky shadows made injury more likely, and I knew my chances of getting out without a bivouac were waning as well. My uneasiness grew out of anticipating cold, hassle, and failure. It wasn’t fear of the place or its creatures, though the Big Lava Bed would make a marvelous set for a cinematic version of the deep, dark woods where sinister things lie in wait. Dark woods have never seemed sinister to me, but my own shortcomings can be truly frightening.

When you read about lost children or hunters or hikers in the papers, you wonder what they’re going through, at what point they panic, and then what happens. Everyone knows that the disoriented are likely to walk in circles and get more dislocated with every step. Now I knew something of that feeling. The pines looked identical, the rocks were repeats. There was the squirrel midden again, or was it a different one? The squirrels made fun with their piping hoots; the ravens honked discouragement. Panic? No, but a nauseated wave when I realized how a short ramble had become a desperate scramble by the easiest, silliest increments. Though sweaty in my wool, I was cold, and it looked like a bad time coming.

Then, just as I was thinking about pulling together a rough shelter and gathering a few berries and chanterelles before dark, I stepped between a clump of pines and a lump of lava onto the rough track I’d come in on. I had indeed gone in at least one circle, probably circumscribing the oval on my map. In the end I had arrived very near where I thought I was aiming for. I hadn’t so much

misplaced myself as taken leave of my confidence. The Big Lava Bed will do that to you. I stepped lightly onto the flat surface of the track, feeling the way you do coming off a long, awful drive, hitting the pavement, and throttling down.

Coming out south of my entry point, I found a dozen or more sinkholes. Unlikely to be from meltwater or rainwater at this season, the little lagoons must have artesian sources. Whether the disappeared Lost and Lava creeks tie in to the underground system and reemerge at the south end as Lava and Moss creeks, only the lava bed knows. And perhaps the plants, which know how to find the water wherever it runs. The Big Lava Bed is an ericaceous haven—a heathland full of kinnikinnick, manzanita, their hybrids, two salals, wintergreens, pipsissewa, huckleberries, and others. The odd shrub *Garrya*, heathlike but in a family by itself, is a specialty of the lava landscape. Its flowers hang in silky tassels. Now old tassels dangled among next year's firm buds and tough, shiny green leaves. I ate a "little apple," the fruit of the manzanita. It was sweet and tasty, with little meat and lots of big, hard seeds, but with water in its tissues. A raven alighted in a snag, howled to let Seeahtlks know I was about and stealing his little apples.

In the dusk I could see that the ponds had drawn some attention. There was an old handmade picnic table, an elaborate fire pit of lava rocks, but no litter. Heaven forbid, I thought, that this should ever become an interpretive site. So far it seems unlikely. According to the forest planners, the Big Lava Bed receives only an estimated two hundred RVDs—recreation visitor days—per year. Or perhaps that's how many come out after venturing in.

——

Without a doubt this was one of the wildest, most forbidding landscapes I'd ever known. The only place that came close was the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes in Katmai National Monument, Alaska. Marching across the polychrome pumice gulleys of that eruptive plain toward the caldera, I felt as far from anything as I have ever been. But I was never lost there.

Now, in a land of gaping black holes and razor scarps of lava, I had known the meaning of lost, if only briefly. It means being aloof from your whereabouts, unable to predict, let alone count on, what comes next. It means facing each footstep with a forlorn question, getting no answers from your logic or your

heart. To lose yourself is to be cut off from communication with the ground underfoot, the sky overhead. It is almost the worst thing that can happen to a species whose sense of place is often forgotten and never enough. Lost is a peril, a trial, a torture; it is the only kind of certainty that you never wanted. And in the Big Lava Bed, where any false step can mean splintered bone, lost could mean dead.

No other animal has ever been lost. Disoriented, maybe. Temporarily confused as to location. But unless tossed in a rat's maze or transported far from home like a bad bear, every creature knows exactly where it is at every waking moment. Each "inferior" animal brain carries its own global positioning device and Geographic Information System as standard operating equipment. At least this is what I believe about the essential nature of wild organisms: by definition they are situated.

Only people get lost. Captain Jack did not lose his bearings in the lava beds of the Modoc country. Humans and other primates for whom the location of the furniture of the land means comfort, security, nourishment, happiness, and even survival never lose their way on their home ground. They may establish songlines or blaze trees to help, but they know. Only we modern ones do not know our way around. Landlorn, without a compass or a clue, we're stuck in the ruts to the who knows where.

Bigfoot doesn't get lost, not here or anywhere. Maybe it would show us the route, help us spot the path back to the land. If we don't find our way home soon, we will find ourselves instead out in the sun with Captain Jack, backs against the hot rock wall, hunted out by the howitzers of change. I learned two things here. Whether my compass works or not, I'll never go in there again without it. And if Bigfoot ever has to make a stand, it ought to be here, in the Big Lava Bed.

# 18

# Mermaids, Monsters, and Metaphors

*His parting from life*

*was no cause for grief*
*to any of the men who examined the trail*

*of the conquered one*
*saw how, despairing he had rushed away*

*ruined in the fight*
*to the lake of monsters fleeing, doomed*
*in bloody footprints.*
*—Beowulf*

So what the hell is it?”

Sheriff Angleford shifted a stubby paw from his hip to his chin, then retrieved the drained Styrofoam cup from the truck’s bumper and pretended to drink the dregs. “Damned if I know.”

Hank Peterson prodded the duff beside the truck with his boot. “You know what they’re saying, Ed.”

“I know . . . they’re starting to talk about goldurned Bigfoot again. I thought we got rid of it that last time around, when we pulled that prankster out of the woods and ran him out of town.”

“Yeah, but this time there’s that dead goat, all chewed up . . .”

“So? Cougar, bear. Ain’t no goddamn monster.”

“But there’s more tracks like these over there, Ed. And the doc thinks he saw one, comin’ home from the widow Bates’s Saturday. Said it was bigger ’n Kandoll’s ox stood endwise.”

“That wasn’t any medical call,” said the sheriff. “And who knows how much schnapps doc and the Bates woman had between ’em?”

“Folks are worried, Ed. They’re talkin’ posse.”

“Yeah, like that ‘posse’ they got up when Slade squeezed out of the county coop? That ‘posse’ ended up in the Triangle Tavern, as I recall.” Angleford and Peterson kicked a little more dirt around. They had met at the end of the Cedar Creek road, where a hunter had reported a line of giant footprints.

The deputy’s cruiser threw up a fog of pumice dust. Deputy Potrillo leapt out. “Hey, Hank, Sheriff, we got it! You need to get over to Jake Kandoll’s place, and quick.”

“Got what? What’re you yammering about, Potrillo?”

“That ape-monster! Kandoll and some boys’ve got it pinned down in a canyon behind his place. He’s pissed about that goat.”

“If he’s got anything in that brush-hole, he’s got a bear. Or more likely a porcupine!”

“I saw it move, Sheriff. It’s big . . . standing up and . . . and yowling and like that. And does it ever stink. Man, it stinks!”

“I told you,” said Peterson. “I’ve believed in it for a long time, most folks

around here do, really. Now you're gonna find out what I'm talking about."

Sheriff Angleford, a Montana cop before coming to Washington the year before, had lucked into the sheriff's job when two local men split the election. When he learned about the county ordinance against killing Bigfoot, he just laughed. "Hairy apes!" he said. "Next they'll put little green men on the endangered species list." Now he found himself swept along with a band of locals brandishing rifles at a brushy gully, yelling about something he didn't even believe in. As the light faded, and howls continued to emanate from the ravine, some of the men wanted to start a fire to smoke the howler out.

"That's the only way," said Kandoll, the owner of the land, hoarse from the general excitement. "We sure as hell ain't going in there after it. It's all poison oak anyway."

Angleford, for the first time since he'd taken office, found himself supervising crowd control. Crowds didn't often gather in Skapoose County, but this one was growing fast.

"Hold on," he shouted, rolling his bulk in front of the mob. "You can't start a fire. You know the restriction's on. You're liable to burn the whole damn mountain down."

"How else we gonna get 'im out?" the truculent Kandoll demanded.

"Besides," said the sheriff, "I thought you people had some law around here protecting these so-called Bigfeet. Pretty big fine, isn't it?"

A spare man in a checked jacket and shiny tie spoke up, a county commissioner. "Ten thousand dollars. Yeah, statute's still on the books," he said.

"That's nothing," Kandoll grunted. "It's my land; I can shoot what I want. Besides, them durn scientists'd pay me a lot more than that to get a look at this here deal." Several of his neighbors laughed their agreement.

"Hell, I'd pay that much just to get a look at this thing," one of them said.

A woman from the Department of Fish and Wildlife arrived in a green pickup within minutes of the red Blazer driven by Peter Byrne of the Bigfoot Research Project. She saw the guns and sized it up. "Who's got a license to hunt at this season?" she asked. "What are you planning on shooting?"

No one answered. The young woman faced a row of stony faces. She was about to use her handheld radio, when Byrne, stretching his soft British accent to be heard, said, "Listen up, you men."

"How'd the guy from *Wild Kingdom* get here?" asked a logger, and the others laughed. But they listened.

"If you really have a Bigfoot in there," he went on, "we're interested. But it

won’t do anyone any good to kill it. We’ve been trying to find one to make contact. This might be our best chance yet.” Once he’d said it, some of the people jeered, but others concurred, including Kandoll’s wife.

“Why should you shoot it anyway, Jake?” she said. “It just wants to be left alone. One goat doesn’t matter that much.”

“It’ll be the ox next,” her husband barked. “You’re just being a softy . . . or else them old Indi’n stories are gettin’ to you again. I told you to stop listenin’ to them.”

“But, Jake, there might be something to the stories . . .”

“This here ain’t no goddamn *spirit*, Elma. It’s a durned *ape*, and it *ate my goat*.”

As dark came on, the sheriff and the wildlife agent and the commissioner and the Bigfoot researcher argued over jurisdiction and tactics of peacefully capturing or contacting the creature, while the roars continued from the brush. Suddenly the tone changed. The cry became a sharp whistle. All heads turned toward the head of the box canyon. Another whistle answered from the rim. There, profiled against the dusk skyline of the clear-cut above the ranch, stood a massive black figure.

A hush like an empty grave fell over the unruly aggregation of the curious and the fearful. Everyone saw the figure. Whistles flew like swallows back and forth between the beast in the brushy grotto and the one on the top. The rim-walker gestured, roared, and whistled again.

Byrne was the first to speak. “That’s it,” he said quietly. “That’s what we’ve been seeking, all right. It’s bigger than I thought.” He was awed, amazed, moved. Then, the shocked spell broken, a clamor arose. A torch was lit. Men shouted, “Get it!” A rifle shot cracked open the night.

——

Hokey? Of course. But it would be like that. We’ve all seen a hundred movies like it. An unknown or mythical life form arrives stage left—space alien, subterranean, mermaid, whatever—and the reaction of the people on the scene is . . . well, reactionary. The sympathies of the movie audience lie firmly with the interloper, who tragically perishes at the hands of the army, science, or villagers with pitchforks or shotguns. We feel communal moral indignation and pity for a harmless creature misunderstood and feared. And the conclusion, every time, is

that it did not have to happen. The lucky ones, such as E.T. or the mermaid in *Splash!* escape with the help of the protagonist; but only after hair-raising episodes of wrong-headed persecution.

I know what I'm talking about here. When I was a preteen, my friends and I became completely bewitched by Bela Lugosi, Boris Karloff, and Lon Chaney, Jr. We began a monster club with ranks: I, as Frankenstein, was president, then came Dracula, the Wolf Man, and Caris the Mummy. I borrowed my father's boots for monster clogs, and my friends' mothers made batwing cookies and cherry Kool-Aid vampire punch for our meetings. Our delusions of grandeur ran toward making our own movie with my grandfather's wind-up Keystone, a primitive sixteen-millimeter motion picture camera. We storyboarded the plot, and of course the monster (played by me) would meet a glorious demise out by the old canal. We never graduated to the slasher genre, two holes in the neck being about as much abstracted gore as we wanted. But for all the fun, some innocence was lost. Those old movies told us all we needed to know about the mean-spirited actions of grown-ups toward whatever they failed to understand.

After generations of movies with the same basic script, we should not be surprised if our baser motivations prevailed and we extended pitchforks instead of open arms to any outrageous beast that had the misfortune to walk off the set and into our midst. I suppose the theme survives because it never ceases to jerk tears and sell tickets; but does anyone doubt that we would react this way, given the opportunity? Or that we would feel anything but remorse about it afterward? The issue has been one for scriptwriters and dreamers so far, since few outlandish species have dared to show up. But if Bigfoot walked out of the woods tomorrow, how would we behave?

——

Several years ago Sally Hughes, John Hinchliff, and I found a species of butterfly that was new for the Washington list at the foot of the Big Lava Bed. We had been seeking the golden hairstreak in the state for a decade, reasoning that where its host plant grew, the insect flew. Its larvae feed strictly on the foliage of golden chinquapin, a western type of wild chestnut. The shrubby tree and the butterfly are widespread in California and not uncommon in Oregon all the way north to the Columbia River. I had a feeling that if we could find the few golden chinquapins rumored to occur across the river on the Washington side,

we would find the butterfly as well.

The Army Corps of Engineers' *Environmental Atlas of Washington State*, the same document that helped legitimize the search for Sasquatch, showed the chinquapin in parts of Clark County. We scoured the region but found none. A few years later a paper by professor of botany Arthur Kruckeberg, one of my longtime mentors at the University of Washington, detailed the whereabouts and ecology of the chinquapin in two Washington locations. At last we were able to visit them, and within seconds we confirmed the state record of *Habrodais grunus* as well.

Kruckeberg had been concerned about the effects of logging on the chinquapins. They are considered weed trees by many foresters in California and Oregon, and the few scraggly ones in Skamania County were certainly not being given any special protection from spraying and log-slash. By finding the butterfly and subsequently having it listed as a "Priority One Special Animal" by the Washington Natural Heritage Program, we doubled the reason for the USFS to attend to the dispersed chinquapins. Together the butterfly and plant people lobbied the Gifford Pinchot and gained the interest of USFS biologists. All this resulted in a few lines in the Forest Plan about both organisms and a degree of attention to their well-being. I have since heard from colleagues that at least some chinquapins have been flagged with ribbons meaning "do not harm," and the hairstreaks are thriving. The long-term health of these species locally is still in question, but if they are lost it won't be from ignorance. Unlike certain other novel creatures reputed to occur in the area but never "proven" with a specimen, at least they have been recognized.

One evening during my exploration of the Big Lava Bed, following a day's walking, I visited the site of our discovery to see if I could find the golden hairstreaks again. They appear in the late summer and fall and are reported to fly at dawn and dusk as well as in full sunshine. But perhaps this was too late in the season or the day even for them. I did not find them, nor any eggs. There were fewer chinquapins, and they were very dusty from a long season of logging-truck traffic.

In that autumnal haze, with the scrubby growth black on the black, scabby-toe lava, the idea that golden-leaved trees and golden-winged butterflies occurred here together seemed outlandish. Yet we know these life forms exist, not by faith or belief, but by Cartesian means: Professor Kruckeberg's paper, based on herbarium sheets, and our discovery, backed up by a small series of specimens in the state museum. In other words, the evidence is concrete. It depends neither on

hearsay nor on the leaky memory of some field observer but on actual specimens. And there's the rub when it comes to Bigfoot: there is no body.

Nonconsumptive wildlife enthusiasts and weekend naturalists often fail to appreciate the need for collecting specimens. If we can see the creature or the plant in the field, they ask, why is there any need to kill it? Often their point is well taken. Christmas bird counts and Fourth of July butterfly counts have shown that sight records can be just as meaningful as specimens in many instances. After all, we have come a long way from the days when every bird had to be shot to credit its occurrence. Picking wildflowers is considered antisocial.

In some circumstances, however, field biologists require what they call voucher specimens. The initial scientific description of a taxon (species or variety) is a formal procedure; the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN) insists on designation of a type specimen, a kind of yardstick against which all future examples of the taxon can be gauged. Voucher specimens are also required for proof that a species has been found out of its known range and for some teaching and research purposes. More and more we find ways of representing organisms with photos, models, or field notes, yet for some needs only an example will suffice.

People who oppose collecting are often surprised to learn that the small numbers of specimens taken by scientists have a negligible impact on populations—certainly nowhere near that of hunting, fishing, roadkills, bug zappers, pesticides, or habitat development—and collecting can contribute immensely to conservation. As the raw material of biogeography (plant and animal distribution studies), collections enable us to characterize where living things occur and where they don't—and then to question why they don't live where one would expect. Applied biogeography has led to more direct habitat conservation measures than any other process has. Without museum and amateur collectors, we would lack the necessary data to assess conservation needs. If sight records progressively replace specimens for this function, all the better. But especially for invertebrates, we are so far from classifying and being able to recognize most of the species (that is, most of life on earth) that to end collecting tomorrow would darken the prospects for preserving biodiversity.

So when Grover Krantz calls for taking a specimen of Bigfoot, he is not being bloodthirsty. As a scientist he is keenly aware of the role of anthropological artifacts and biological specimens. He firmly believes that a single body will establish the existence of the species and lead to its instant protection and

permanent conservation, and that these considerations justify its killing.

To what extent is he right? Krantz, in *Big Footprints*, explains the attitude of many scientists as "I'll see it when I believe it." In other words, their minds (and eyes) are closed to unlikely possibilities. This, he says, is exactly the view faced by the discoverers of *Pithecanthropus* and *Australopithecus*, now considered major players in the ancestry of humankind. *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes*, in response to prods from John Green and others, decided to "welcome . . . any reasonably scientific paper dealing with the sasquatch phenomenon." Subsequently, in that journal, Krantz proposed the official naming of Bigfoot, using casts of footprints as the requisite type specimen. Concurring with the suggestions of John Green in 1968 and Yerkes Primate Center Director Geoffrey Bourne in 1975, he concluded that Bigfoot is congeneric with the giant fossil ape *Gigantopithecus blacki*. Krantz erected the name *G. canadensis* for Bigfoot, reserving the possibility of changing it to *Giganthropus canadensis* if *G. blacki* turns out to have been a knuckle-walker instead of erectly bipedal like Bigfoot.

There is precedent for the naming of cryptids. In 1975 Sir Peter Scott, the distinguished wildfowl artist and conservationist, with Robert Rines, applied the name *Nessiteras rhombopteryx* to the Loch Ness monster in the journal *Nature*. The "Ness-marvel diamond-fin" description was based on impressive underwater photographs obtained by Rines's Academy of Applied Science of Boston, the same outfit that supports Peter Byrne's Bigfoot Research Project. Although a famous old photo of Nessie has recently been disclosed as a hoax, the AAS sonargrams have not been discredited. Sir Peter's action was criticized as wishful and premature and also praised for its prescience. His purpose was to promote the saurian's conservation. In 1976 Byrne followed suit by informally proposing adoption of the Linnaean name *Homo nocturnus* for Bigfoot-like creatures. In the absence of a type specimen or formal scientific description, this name must remain invalid, what the ICZN terms a *nomen nudum*.

So if Bigfoot has already been classified, why do we need a specimen? Because the world has not been quick to embrace Krantz's (or Scott's) description; most of the scientific establishment maintains an attitude of outright disdain or utter indifference. After the fact, Krantz's paper might be recognized for its priority in zoological nomenclature; but in the meantime, in the monolithic eye of Science, Bigfoot remains in the realm of mermaids, Minotaurs, and unicorns. And conservation too takes the subject of hairy monsters in vain. So until there's a specimen, there will be no name, no page in

the textbooks and field guides, no slot in the Forest Plan alongside owls and martens and salmon and cedars and chinquapins and butterflies.

Byrne and others who don't want to see even one Bigfoot killed argue that the animal will be recognized and protected if it is reliably sighted, with good films and multiple witnesses as articles of proof or, at most, with blood samples taken from a tranquilized animal. Krantz replies that if the authorities won't accept the Patterson film and footprints with dermal ridges they are not likely to accept anything but a body.

Assuming that there would be value to science and perhaps to the species if an example were collected, three questions arise: (1) how to catch one, (2) what to do with the specimen, and
(3) what ethical issues must be dealt with, both before and after the fact. I'll consider these seemingly contradictory questions in that order, since in my opinion the last is the most important.

All the hunters have their own programs and schemes for catching a Sasquatch. Grover Krantz has effectively discounted the effectiveness of most of these in advance. Plans for trapping, tranquilizing, and heat-seeking the giants all have big flaws. What's left is the blunt hunt, with or without guns.

Robert W. Morgan mounted a colorful search on the slopes of Mount St. Helens well before its 1980 eruption. A local source remembered Morgan as five foot six, bald, with a goatee and piercing blue eyes. His American Yeti Expedition 1970 included an archaeologist, a cinematographer, and several young men and women, some with degrees in biology. They are supposed to have tracked the beast in forest and cave with jeeps, night-vision devices, psychics, and, at one point, a nude female volunteer as "bait," though this detail creeps into accounts of many hunts and is probably always apocryphal.

The expedition was cosponsored by a Florida agent, a film company, and the National Wildlife Federation. George Harrison, managing editor of *National Wildlife*, went along and later wrote about it for the magazine. Morgan's plan was to capture a Bigfoot and fly it to Washington, D.C., for study. "Upon completion of the research," wrote Harrison, "Morgan intends to have the creature flown back to the Pacific Northwest and released unharmed in its native wilderness haunts."

The expedition spent fifty thousand dollars and found several sets of tracks not uniformly accepted as genuine before dissolving in disarray and allegations of hoaxing. A local Native American described the outing as "more Hollywood than science" and said his family was "haunted" by Morgan's crew. "There are

two ways of dealing with the hunters," he told me, "and they're both wrong. One, don't talk, and they won't leave you alone, thinking you know something; two, talk and the tabloids get you."

A different but equally ineffectual approach centered on a paramilitary Bigfoot cadre based in Vancouver, Washington. As Ray Crowe told me, members of this group held ranks and called their leader "El Capitan." They went forth in big-wheeled trucks, armed with assault rifles, spotlights, and camouflage. God knows what all they shot, but it wasn't Bigfoot.

Such weirdnesses might not represent the mainstream (if "Bigfoot mainstream" is not an oxymoron), but there are certainly lots of guys with guns out in the woods looking for giants. They are all hopeful of the result predicted by a veteran Bigfoot hunter in Kentucky, where the local ridge-dwellers call the animals "wild woolly bullies." Quoted by Marian Place in *Bigfoot All Over the Country*, James Vincent said that the backwoods people "hear them stomping along the ridgetops, and hear them screeching. These folks think the same as I do. Bigfoot is a very curious animal. One day this curiosity is going to get one killed."

And that, essentially, is a conclusion devoutly to be wished for, according to Grover Krantz. "If I could come up with the money," he told *Washington* magazine writer Michael Schmelzer, "I would hire a team of expert trackers and hunters and send them off into the mountains with very specific instructions: Bring me a Sasquatch, dead or alive."

Suppose Grover, or anyone, got his Sasquatch—then what? As he rightly suggested in his visceral presentation at Harrison Hot Springs, anyone who succeeds in the hunt or finds a roadkill will have to face this challenge. "There would be several gallons of blood," he said, "one heck of a mess."

Krantz divided this "nasty little problem" into a number of questions. How would you handle the specimen? Who would you trust to help you? How would you transport a rotting, stinking mass of that magnitude? Where would you take it to authenticate the find and establish your interest in it? What would you get from it? How would you protect it from being taken or appropriated? What legal threats would you face? What would you do about general harassment from the media? Would there be danger from pro-lifers? How should you pursue your legal rights?

Each of these questions, he feels, presents a major obstacle. You could hardly move the corpse by yourself, so you'd have to decide what parts to take. Any assistance would mean competition. Do you try for a refrigerated truck, and if

so, would it be usable again? Fame and fortune, which might be the chief rewards, are easy to understand, stemming from straight selfishness. There might also be product endorsements for the discoverer; newspaper, magazine, and book receipts; and sales of body parts—but the negative impact on your life might cancel the benefits. (Krantz spoke with a soft irony that many listeners missed altogether.)

You would need to protect your find from theft by competitors, government confiscation, bears, coyotes, ravens, vultures, other scavengers, and the timber companies (who might try to destroy any sign of it). Everyone would want a piece of the action, not to mention the body—the media, the museums, the government, the "best of the Jane Goodall clones," who, Krantz feels, would be eager to study the creature.

Krantz thinks the Skamania County ordinance would not apply, since it proscribes "wantonly killing" Bigfoot, and scientific collecting is not wanton. As for other authorities, he says, your action would be to all intents and purposes "like killing a unicorn"—they can't prosecute you for something whose existence they don't recognize. He thinks the timber companies might try to buy a scientific opinion that the animal was human, in which case the Endangered Species Act would not apply and its killer would be a murderer. "Some nuts will almost certainly come forward to charge the successful hunter with murder," Krantz said, and they might try to prosecute. And failing that, to persecute. He wouldn't put it past the animal rightists to levy a Salman Rushdie–style fatwa on the killer of Bigfoot, and he evinced some concern that the discoverer might be subject to the same sort of hysteria that abortion doctors have had to face from murderous pro-lifers.

I asked Grover what he thought about keeping the specimen in liquid, the way invertebrates are preserved. Wouldn't it be easier to store and transport in alcohol, like Lord Nelson shipped home from Trafalgar in rum? The tallest gorilla ever held in captivity (Baltimore Jack, six foot three) is preserved in formaldehyde at Arizona State University. Krantz didn't think much of my idea. His own plan would be to get the skin and the head and whatever else proved possible. He knows he would be criticized, no matter how he approached it, for damaging or leaving important materials; and he would ask his critics just how they would deal secretly with an unidentified half-ton primate. The important thing, he believes, would be to have a specimen.

After a Bigfoot evening at Portland Community College, put on by enthusiast Richard (Rip) Lyttle, several of us were chatting over Chinese food and beer.

Peter Byrne was there, along with Rip, Ray Crowe, and Jim Hewkin. I said, “Right, gentlemen. One of us has a roadkilled baby Bigfoot in our trunk. What do we do about it?” Around the table eyes flashed with a mixture of mirth and earnestness. I got the feeling that no one, friendly as they were, would trust anyone else there enough to let them in on the find. Byrne assumed an authoritative and cryptic air and simply said, “We have a plan.” In fact, as I later learned, the Bigfoot Research Project does have a detailed (and secret) plan, not only for dealing with the carcass of an unfortunate victim but also for detecting a living beast to make a nonviolent “find.”

——

Plans and rationales aside, when it comes to killing a Sasquatch, we are entering the darkest of all the several divides that I considered during my days with Bigfoot. In short, since we proscribe the killing of humans, what about hominids, or hominoids? We have proved ourselves capable of truly bestial acts against creatures with whom we share most of our DNA, namely the chimps and gorillas, and in many cases we call it legal. But we define them as belonging to the Pongidae, the great apes, along with orangutans and gibbons. This seems to give us the distance we need to kill without feeling great moral distress.

The familial division between humans (Hominidae) and great apes (Pongidae) is an artificial distinction. Orangs and gibbons split off earlier, most agree, and the family Pongidae makes some sense for them. But if we separate *Homo* from *Gorilla* and *Pan* (chimpanzees) at the familial level, we ought also to split lions from tigers, foxes from wolves, ducks from geese, giving each group its own family. I asked Krantz what he thought of the hominid/pongid division. He said the traditional split makes sense from the standpoint of morphology (form) and common sense, but the phylogenetic (evolutionary) reality was certainly that humans and other apes, except perhaps orangs, belong in a single family. This expanded sense of the Hominidae raises serious ethical issues.

Krantz is not oblivious to these. He thinks Sasquatch deserves the same consideration we give the great apes—implicitly, general protection but not immunity from killing when it is judged to be in the interest of the commonweal. He believes that Bigfoot is not human, based on the animal’s apparent nonusage of tools, a major criterion of humanity among anthropologists (though muddier now, with Jane Goodall’s discovery that chimps are tool users). He feels the

creature probably is no more intelligent than the other great apes. And if he is mistaken, he told me, and Sasquatch belongs in the genus *Homo*, then the need to know it and protect it is that much greater.

Before I knew Krantz, I had assumed that this lanky, broody, and sarcastically witty man was so invested in proving Bigfoot's existence that he was desperate to vindicate his name and willing to take any means toward that end. Some have called him a Bigfoot butcher. That characterization, I found in talking with him, is far from the mark. He maintains that he is otherwise content in his career and can take Bigfoot or leave it. Of course, since he is human, proof would be very sweet for him indeed. But he does not seem obsessed.

"Sasquatch," Krantz has written, "is not the most important subject in the world . . . [It] may well be the most important of . . . unproven animals because it is probably our closest living relative. Still, it is not human, and there are millions of real people in this world who need help far more desperately than the sasquatch does."

In a short conclusion to *Big Footprints*, entitled "Keeping It in Perspective," Krantz suggests that a Bigfoot specimen will cause a dust storm among a few government officials and lumber barons, will ruffle both the creationists and evolutionists, and the "news media will have a hey-day and will badger every participant so much that they will wish (at least for the moment) that it had never happened." His own prestige will get a blip, not much more, and then "life will go on, almost as if nothing had happened."

I asked Krantz what misgivings he'd have about killing "our closest living relative." Far from cavalier, he paused and gave me a thoughtful response that I took as both ingenuous and expressive of the conundrums involved here: "If the time comes when I have the choice of shooting or not, it will be the most difficult decision I have ever been faced with. And," he went on, "however I decide to act, I will regret it for the rest of my life."

——

Not all of the Bigfoot hunters express such compunction. Danny Perez's bibliography, *Big Footnotes*, is dedicated to "the first woman or man to collect a Sasquatch." A September 18, 1994, Associated Press story lionized an Idaho man named Ralph Squires. "When he enters Sasquatch's mind," said the AP, "his senses heighten, he feels a harmony within, and he's in tune with everything

around him." Everything, that is, except Bigfoot. "Squires intends to kill the first Bigfoot he encounters, saying that the mystery needs to be solved." Pictured smug and ready to go in camouflage, with night-vision goggles and an elephant gun, Squires said, "I hunt hard, I hunt the wind . . . All of a sudden Bigfoot'll be there, and I'll be ready for the challenge of my life."

Even otherwise peaceful men find their principles stretched when they contemplate such a treasure as the first Bigfoot. In hindsight some wish they had fired when they had the chance. When Patterson and Gimlin encountered the famous subject of their film at Bluff Creek, they both were carrying high-powered rifles. They had agreed not to shoot unless absolutely necessary, a point on which Patterson was adamant. Gimlin, covering Patterson as the filmmaker ran after the beast, never came close to shooting; later he wished he had. And in a 1992 letter to me, Peter Byrne wrote, "I still think of Patterson, dying, sitting in a chair in the sun in his back garden in Yakima, a skeleton of a man (Hodgkin's disease) saying to me . . . 'You know, we should have shot that thing; then people would have believed us.'" Only near death, unvindicated, did Roger Patterson reluctantly change his mind.

In the opposite shadow of this divide stands Byrne himself, the primary searcher of stature to forswear a violent approach. As Byrne wrote in *The Search for Bigfoot*, "It seems incredible in this day and age that there are people who would want to shoot something like a Bigfoot . . . [This] is cruel and unjustified thinking, and I would not condone it, not even for so-called scientific reasons." As for "wanting to shoot one for monetary gain," Byrne says, "this is mindless cretinism of the lowest form."

Most Bigfoot hunters, even if they prefer that the animal not be killed, would not outright condemn doing so. Many others support live capture, study, and release. Byrne's book, *The Search for Bigfoot*, included an off-putting list of problems with this approach. Even if the technology was properly guessed and the animal was not killed by an overdose or hurt by half-drugged wandering, Byrne contended, a major problem would remain: Would those in charge be able to resist the pressures to keep it or kill it? He quoted George Hass of Oakland, who asked, "What would happen, if while you have the creature in hand, either drugged or in a cage, healthy and well, some powerful organization like Disney Studios walks up and offers a check for half a million for the body? Are you then going to let the thing go?" Even so, Byrne has recently decided to consider tranquilizing a Bigfoot, should his Bigfoot Research Project succeed in finding one, in order to obtain blood samples for definite proof.

It is fair to say that the great majority of amateur Bigfoot enthusiasts and members of the interested public want the animal to remain untouched, even if it means never proving its existence. For this reason, Byrne is seen as an exotic "good guy" in the field, while many cast Krantz (with media help) in a black hat. But is it simply a matter of Byrne taking the moral high road and Krantz the pragmatic means-for-the-ends approach? I think it is much more complicated. The two men respect each other's heartfelt positions, even though they differ. Krantz may be right to believe that only a specimen in hand will guarantee acceptance by the protection authorities, and Byrne's position may be completely unrealistic. And none of the Bigfoot investigators has had the opportunity to discover what he would actually do in the event. Several hunters have reported having Bigfoot in their sights and feeling unable to pull the trigger because the target struck them as "more human than animal."

Our actions and attitudes about killing are a mass of contradictions, confusions, and hypocrisies. We all must kill to eat, to live, to breathe, to walk, and each of us draws the line somewhere. Certain yogis wear masks, it is said, so as not to inhale and kill microorganisms. Vegetarians will not kill animals for their own nutrition (for a variety of reasons) but are content to kill plants, which are living things. I used to collect butterflies for the thrill of it, then for the trophies, then for discovery, eventually for college tuition money, and finally for research purposes. I have known all these motives and acted on them, and I still feel their contradictory tugs. Yet I am no more confused than three friends who have expressed abhorrence at my taking the lives of butterflies: one a fly fisherman, one a moose hunter, the third a fur broker.

Since I have found it possible to justify the killing of moths and butterflies, I have tried hard to sympathize with Grover Krantz's position. I find I cannot come around to it. When I sought out the vultures' find in the Big Lava Bed, I would have been as excited as anyone to find a Bigfoot corpse that had died of an accident or disease. But when I peered through the lodgepoles, sighting along the handle of my net at a lava pinnacle about the size, shape, and color of a Sasquatch, I knew that even if Marsha had been a buffalo gun instead of a butterfly net I could never shoot. I draw my own personal line somewhere between butterflies and Bigfoot.

As I wrote in my piece for *Washington*, "Should we kill one Bigfoot, there will be a blood-rush for specimens: museums, zoos, roadside attractions, labs—all will want their own. And like the great auk, Sasquatch might not survive this flood of lethal attention." Both Byrne and Krantz have pointed out the naive flaw

in this reasoning: even if one Bigfoot was found, the rest would not be any easier to find than they have been these hundred years and more. And Krantz is probably correct that one killed Bigfoot would lead to statutory protection for the rest.

So why do I continue to resist gigantocide? And that raises other questions: Why worry about the fate of an animal that is not at all certain to exist in flesh and blood? What ethical standards apply—what scruples should we display—toward premeditated killing, when the victim might be an ancestor, a cousin, or a pipe dream?

I am certain that some of the would-be giant killers see themselves as exactly that—some Jack, some David, some Saint George or Saint Michael or Muhammad Ali—out to dance like a butterfly and sting like a broadsword. Such Uzi-toting dragon-slayers would rejoice in the act of righteously blowing away Bigfoot, which they vaguely imagine as an archetype of evil like that embodied in giants, dragons, monsters, and the Other. They are the kind of men who would take satisfaction in gunning down the last wolf. That way lies the pogrom, the bounty, and all manner of final solutions.

But these gun-happy Jacks (and Krantz is not remotely among them) have got it backward. We have here, if we have anything, the greatest gift of evolution in our time, just as Mount St. Helens is an immense gift of geology, and in the same place. If Sasquatches exist, we should cherish them. By so doing, we might reinforce how to treat one another better. At this juncture in our brutal history—after Rwanda, after Bosnia, after Tiananmen Square—would we not be well advised to take the humane approach at every opportunity, toward the broadest possible concept of the Family of Man?

Or shall we begin this new relationship through the sights of a high-powered rifle, like any despicable sniper; or the jaws of a great steel trap, as we did for wolves and grizzlies throughout their former empires? If Krantz is right, and Bigfoot is *Gigantopithecus*, it is hominoid; if Byrne is right, it is hominid. If Myra Shackley is right, and Bigfoot equates with Neandertal, it is human. If the Kwakiutl and Klickitat are right, it is both human . . . and spirit. And if the doubters are right and Bigfoot is nothing but thin air, then it still exists within the lineage of our hearts. If we condone the killing of our evolutionary companions—our friends, our brothers and sisters, our ancestors, our dreams—how far can we be from the brink?

We know that Bigfoot is one big metaphor—a model for wildness, the unknown, tumid and hirsute desires with no names, the godforsaken exile. But

metaphors can get up and walk. How sadly ironic it would be if something amazing had to be executed in order to prove that it wasn't a standin for something else. Or as Blackfeet singer-songwriter Jack Gladstone put it: "What is the proper way to express what can't be seen? For our senses grasp only a glimpse of the mystery between. Therefore I'm resigned to weave my way through the forest of word-lore, dyin' for a metaphor." Will that be Bigfoot—dyin' for a metaphor? As if in reply, in "The Man in the Mirror," John Sparrow wrote, "Wouldn't it be nice to think that there was something left that the human could encounter without bringing death."

Surely we can agree to leave the question of Bigfoot's existence open until unimpeachable photographic or first-person testimony proves it for all but the most cynical skeptics, or until a roadkill or subfossil shuts the case tight. Krantz, Perez, and others will reply that photos can always be faked and that there have been plenty of solid testaments already; if doubters won't believe Patterson, then what? It has also been pointed out that no fine nature photographer has ever photographed a Sasquatch, and no professional biologist has ever reported a sighting. This is no proof against; it's just a circumstance. But I suggest that when an Art Wolfe brings in a picture, or a George Schaller presents a sighting, acceptance will surely follow. And if it doesn't? Then sweet mystery will survive another day.

In Hans Christian Andersen's *Little Mermaid*, when the unfortunate hybrid first sees children, she asks her sisters if the children will be her friends. No, the sisters say; when they see your tail, they will be terrified and run away screaming. Eventually she gives up her tongue and her tail for love and legs—and loses it all. The mermaid in *Splash!* would have made out no better if the scientists had had their way. These are fairy tales. But who can doubt that, faced with the real thing, we would behave any better than we do toward our myths . . . or toward ourselves?

For ourselves, as much as for the beast, I want us to be able to think of Bigfoot as an animal or an idea worthy of our best behavior. Bigfoot, I presume, has no desire to be our friend, but we need friends wherever we can find them. How much better poised we might be to approach the times to come with equanimity toward all nature if we could agree to forswear the acts most clearly destined for remorse.

Let's rewrite the end of this movie. Grover Krantz is no murderer but a dedicated and visionary scientist with the best interests of his subject ultimately in mind. Even so, I hope he and the others who want a Bigfoot in hand will

reconsider. Bigfoot belongs in the bush.

# Back to the Dark Divide: 2017

*"Sasquatch, in his full-frontal wonderness!"*

—student, Portland State University

The call came from southern California. "Dr. Pyle," said a male voice, "this is Kurando, at the Robin/Tani Media Factory in Venice. We're representing a Japanese television producer who would like to get in touch with you. It's about Bigfoot."

Just waking up, I was a little geographically confused. Japan? Venice? I'd had plenty of kook phone calls since publication of this book, and I suspected this was another. But the next thing Mr. Kurando said made me listen up.

"The producer of this popular weekly wildlife program in Tokyo read your book," he said, "and liked your message about wildness and the unknown. He would like to make an episode about Bigfoot, and visit you to shoot footage in the Dark Divide."

*Where Bigfoot Walks* had been translated and published in Japan. This happy development led not only to the events I am presently describing, but also to my travel to Okinawa in 2003 with Gary Snyder for a conference of ASLE-Japan. There I had the fun of reading "Ghost Moths at Moonrise" to Rachel Carson's Japanese translator, Terry Tempest Williams down-winder scholars from Hiroshima, a radical Ryukyu novelist, and other Asian environmental writers. I was reminded that during our e-mail exchanges, my translator had shared a body of ancient Japanese hairy giant stories with me. As Mojo Nixon said about Elvis, Bigfoot truly is everywhere. So this earlier call from a show-biz agent in LA, and the connection between Sasquatch and a Tokyo TV show, wasn't as far out in left field as it first seemed.

Over the following weeks, I determined that the title of the program was *Sekai Fushigi Hakken* (*Discoveries of the World's Mysteries*). It was described to me as "a very popular educational entertainment TV quiz show" that had been on the air since 1986. The producer had indeed *gotten* the book, and what I wanted to say with it. I felt he would treat the subject with dignity, and not make it a joke or a parody. So I agreed to meet with the film crew when they came, and to take them up to the Dark Divide. First, I fixed them up with Peter Byrne, Ray Crowe, Larry Lund, and other active Bigfoot folk in the Pacific Northwest. After they'd seen them, on an August day in 1999, I met the eight-person crew at a café in Woodland, Washington: Tamotsu Iwagaki, the producer-director; Kanae

Takeuchi, the show's petite firecracker of a reporter and on-camera host; Kurando Mitsutake, the production coordinator/translator; a Yank expediter-cum-actor from Portland; and four camera-and-sound men. And we went from there.

On the way up the Lewis River, above the village of Cougar, we stopped for an establishing shot into the rising Cascades beyond Yale Reservoir. While waiting around, I found a colony of small blue butterflies on yellow lotus blossoms beside the road. This species had never before been recorded in the western Cascades, so I was excited. The members of the television team were polite about it, but less impressed. They were hoping for bigger game.

As we entered the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Tamotsu asked, "Will we see Bigfoot tracks now?"

"Probably not," I said. "People looking for them hardly ever find anything." To stave off any disappointment I took them into elfin pine forest swaddled with deep, lime lichens, near the legendary lava tube known as Ape Cave. They loved these spooky woods, which reminded the director of similar forests in Hokkaido, and they got some useful footage.

Then Kurando said, "They ask if we can go into the heart of the Dark Divide now?"

That would have involved two or three days of hard hiking, with backpacks, boots, and tents; these were Tokyo people in nice clothes and shoes, on a tight filming schedule.

"Not quite," I said, "but I can take you into wilderness the like of which few Japanese, or Americans for that matter, have ever seen. You won't know the difference between that place and the heart of the Dark Divide." They seemed happy with that. I decided the best way to do it would be to hike a way on Boundary Trail No. 1. So we drove on up Forest Road 25 to Elk Pass, the site of my encounter with Something in the Night. They found the place immediately evocative, and Tamotsu recounted back to me the events in the book with flattering fidelity.

My visitors were indeed wide-eyed as we entered primeval forest of a sort known only in folklore in Japan. But I could tell that the film crew needed something more. So, parking the van at the Elk Pass trailhead, I led them some distance down Boundary Trail No. 1, into the Dark Divide de facto (but unprotected) wilderness. Within three hundred yards we might as well have been thirty miles in. The lichen-festooned, old-growth noble firs rose around us, tall as a Kyoto pagoda, broad as a sumo or two. They'd seen nothing like it, all right.

I pointed out a sapling with limbs twisted off Bigfoot-style, not snapped by ice or snow, and a great midden of bark beneath a dead fir, stacked up as the Klickitats say Tselatiks does it, not tossed about as a pileated woodpecker would. (I had found this big, snow-covered bark-mound the previous autumn and wondered whether it might even be a game-safe; Bigfoot is reputed to make such cold-storage meat-caches). The cameramen eagerly photographed these possible artifacts; at least they were something. I read aloud from the book for the camera, pointing out this 'n' that. Then we headed back toward the van.

This is the important part to note: I was in the lead, and we were traveling cross-country, off-trail, by a route I picked as we went. There was no sign suggesting other humans had been there all season. Deadfall on the trail had mercifully kept both motorcycles and mountain bikes off the Boundary Trail. I took a diagonal path back up toward the road at maybe a twenty-degree pitch, the eight members of the film crew following behind. We were in untracked wilderness.

And then, abruptly, I stopped, right foot in the air. The others bunched and bumped up behind me like Keystone Cops. I still hadn't put my foot down. Because there on the forest floor before me—I'd nearly stepped on it—was a goddamn *track*! Pushed into a pumice slope just below the trail, the impression had forced a stick well into the spongy substrate.

"Oh!" cried Kanae.

"Wow!" Americanized the first cameraman, next in line. And when Tamotsu arrived, before the sound-man, assistant, and Kurando, he simply gaped. That was the moment when he felt, and I knew, that their transatlantic journey was worth every yen of his considerable budget.

The ground was recent Mount St. Helens pumice ash, overlain by fir needlefall, twigs, leaves, and a few patches of old snow. There was very little open ground, and when there was, it was overlain only by the tracks of squirrels, mice, and martens. But here was one patch of bare sand, and smack in the middle of it lay an obvious hominoid hoof print. There was a good heel and right instep ridge, big toe, and push-off scratch marks from the other toes. The preceding and following steps, and most of the trail of which they were a part, would have fallen on heavy plant debris with no impression possible except perhaps to a master tracker, which I am not.

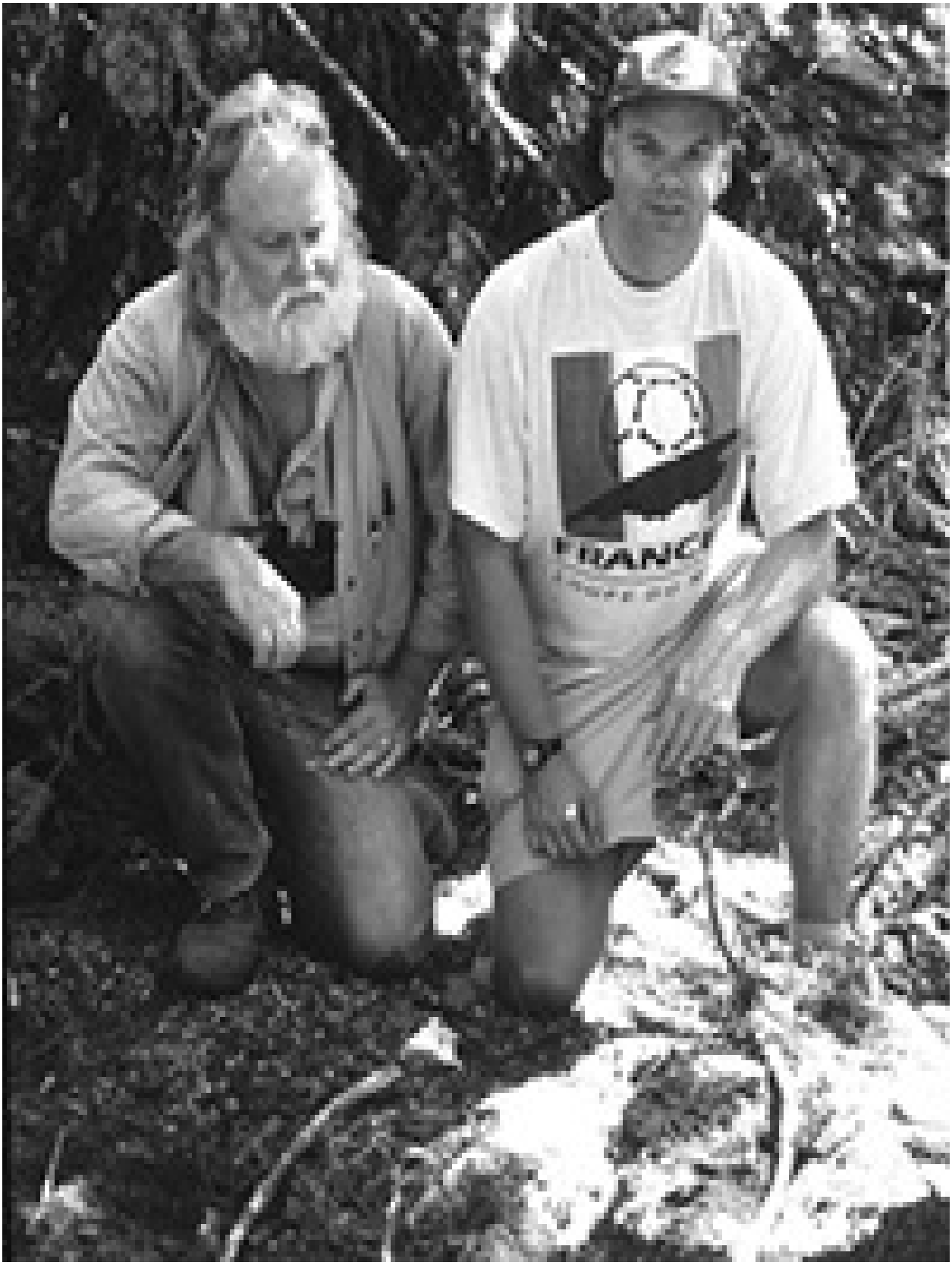
Well, in a word, everyone freaked out. The crew was mesmerized, then ecstatic. I was simply shocked, and afterward, ever since, unsettled. They got busy exposing a lot of videotape while the sunlight lasted. I made measurements

and constructed a stick corral to prevent anyone from inadvertently putting his or her foot in it. Suffice it to say that lots of backs were slapped as we returned to the van with monster-long shadows. My new friends' long trip from Tokyo was made.

We all ate well down at the Rusty Duck restaurant in Longview that evening, before parting. Kurando presented me with a fan with a sumo wrestler on it, a pretty tin of tea, and a nice check. And when the episode was aired a few months later, and Kurando sent me a copy to view on VHS, even through the show's rowdy and very strange format—something like *Hollywood Squares* meets *Animal Planet*—I could see that they'd done the subject proud, and with dignity.

But that wasn't all. The following Monday, I got a call from Jeff Baker, book review editor at the *Oregonian* in Portland. The newspaper had chosen *Where Bigfoot Walks* as their Oregonian Book Club selection for the next month, and Jeff wanted a fresh interview and photo to run with it. He asked if we could take a day-trip up to the Dark Divide for the purpose.

"Sure," I replied. "And, Jeff—have I got something to show you!" So on the Thursday, Jeff, his photographer, and I returned to Elk Pass.



The author, Jeff Baker, and the track found with the Japanese film crew, August, 1999.

My little twig-corral was still there, and the impression had remained perfectly intact. Jeff and I poured the plaster of Paris I'd brought this time (I'd taken none along on the first encounter). It was late in the cooling day, and mixed too thin, so it failed to set up. But before we left, the photographer and I got some decent pictures of the plaster-filled track. The mix ran out on the side of the big toe like a bad bunion, but otherwise it gave a good impression.

The coarse substrate did not make for distinct toe prints other than the big toe, but the heel and outline of the foot, if foot it was, were quite distinct. And here's the important thing: the dimensions of the track were the same as those of the line of tracks I'd discovered following the night of the whistles nine years earlier—and the location was only a few hundred yards from the earlier site on the slope by the borrow pit above the forest road. Suggesting, in other words, the distinct possibility of the very same animal having survived in this location over the past decade.

When I got home after the film shoot, I told Thea the news. A skeptic, at first she said, "Oh, poo!" But when I showed her the measurements against the stick I'd notched just an eighth of a mile away and nine years before, and the dimensions were the same (about sixteen inches long, six across the fifth metatarsal, three-plus across the heel), she said, "Huh!"

As for me, I felt my sense of the creature ramping one notch closer toward outright acceptance.

——

When I went into the woods to look for my sense of Bigfoot, in the autumn of 1990, I came out again with a great and rare gift: an open mind. The actual physical existence of the animal never was the main thing, but rather, the question of whether we can save the kind of wildness in which even the possibility of wood-giants can survive; and the other question, whether the animal manages to retain any of the dignity and power it has always held for its longtime human neighbors. I found that, the tabloids be damned, it does.

But *the* question, it turns out, is inescapable after all. In the twenty years since *Where Bigfoot Walks* was first published, hundreds of readers have written or cornered me and put it to me: "So—do you believe, or not?" I never give them satisfaction, because the fact is, I still don't know. The best of the evidence is not easily dismissed and is sometimes compelling. But *proof*—in the form of big

artifacts like bone or tiny molecules of DNA—continues to be maddeningly elusive. For some hunters, sadly, literally so: the byways of the backwoods are strewn with the tattered lives and minds of frustrated and broke True Believers. It's a kind of gold fever.

This is the central conundrum facing the Bigfoot investigator, hunter, lover, enthusiast, buff, or interested scholar: how does one maintain belief—or better, in my view, an open mind—as year after year goes by without definitive resolution? I see it as a graph, with experience on the ordinate, time on the abscissa, and acceptance as a dependent quantity lying somewhere in between, where doubt intersects with evidence. For sensible people, it takes fresh action on the *y* axis to counter the inexorable passage of demon time on the *x* axis, and to keep hopes afloat.

So what *has* happened since I first crossed the Dark Divide and wrote about it that would serve to keep hope alive for me and others? Of course there has been a vast amount of palaver and poppycock all over the Internet, most of which I studiously avoid. It is easy to disappear into the shadow of this particular chimera and never come out. I take a very selective approach out of self-defense, and to keep it from going all silly or tainted by the toxic side of social media, of which Bigfoot brings out the very worst. Even so, a few bright things have emerged to catch my attention. Here is a brief, far-from-exhaustive litany of what I have found most interesting:

**1.** The Quileutes at the Bookstore: On Publication Day, in the summer of 1995, I gave a reading from the book to a packed house at Elliott Bay Book Company in Seattle. Afterward, a delegation of Native Americans in the back stood and asked to be heard. They were Quileutes, from LaPush (this was long before werewolves and vampires settled into their territory, courtesy of *Twilight*, giving them even stranger bedfellows than Bigfoot). "These people live among us," said their spokesman. "We tell you this not so you will come to bother them or hunt them, but so you will treat them with the respect they deserve. We wanted to see if your book treats them with such respect." (I was deeply relieved to hear that they thought it had.) The audience was struck dumb. He asked if he could play a tape of the creatures' normal sounds, to illustrate what he told us. Rick Simonsen produced a boom box, and two hundred people listened, rapt, to a concert of cries, whistles, and calls much as I'd heard on Elk Pass that night, and at Timberline on Mount St. Helens, that other cold autumn night in 1970. If anyone came to Elliott Bay that evening with a totally locked-up mind, I suspect they felt the tumblers slipping a bit on their way home.

**2.** Jane Goodall Speaks. In the spring of 1998, I was in Washington, D.C., at the Jane Goodall Institute. As a member of the Advisory Board of the Orion Society, I was there to help present Dr. Goodall with the Orion Society's John Hay Award—a signal honor given to Wendell Berry, E. O. Wilson, Peter Matthiessen, Gary Snyder, Ann Zwinger, and other major figures in environmental writing, education, and reform. Jane and I shared the same master editor, Harry Foster, at Houghton Mifflin. "Why didn't you ask me to blurb your book, Bob?" she asked me.

"Oh, we tried," I replied. "But we couldn't reach you in Gombe. Did you like it?"

"Very much," she said. "Only I don't know why you were so circumspect. To me, the evidence seems overwhelming."

**3.** The Bigfoot(?) Butt Print. On September 22, 2000, not far south of Elk Pass at Skookum Meadows, members of the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization (BFRO) conducted a baiting exercise that led to recovery of a complex set of impressions in mud around the bait station. A three-and-a-half-by-five-foot cast (known as the Skookum Body Cast) was taken of what some Bigfoot investigators interpret as a partial body imprint with impressions of hair. According to Wikipedia, the cast is purported to show "the imprint of a forearm, hip, thigh, heel and ankle, and Achilles tendon of a reclining Sasquatch," presumably lying down and reaching for the bait. "Impressions of hair are evident on the buttocks and thigh surfaces of the cast, as well as much longer fringes of hair on the forearm region. Dermal ridges appear on the heel." And "On the same expedition of the BFRO there was evidence of 17-inch footprints that may have belonged to a Sasquatch." However, others in and out of BFRO read the cast quite differently. They say the impressions "can be recognized as the hind legs, hip, chest, and wrists of a reclining elk" in a classic ungulate lie, and that the "dermal ridges" are actually impressions of elk hairs. Clearly, this one is equivocal. But its location deep in the Dark Divide, and the fact that some of the most biologically sophisticated researchers have been won over, make this is an intriguing artifact.

**4.** Jeff Meldrum's Ichnospecies. In September of 2007, the Washington State Capital Museum put on a major exhibition on Bigfoot. The state historian resisted the idea, but his staff prevailed, and it turned out to be their most popular exhibit opening ever. Peter Byrne, Jeff Meldrum, and I were brought in as speakers for an evening event. As a professor of anthropology at Idaho State University, Dr. Meldrum is the intellectual successor (and artifact legatee) of

Grover Krantz, the late Washington State University anthropologist who broke trail for academics interested in Bigfoot. For Meldrum, the respected first describer of several species of protohominids, it still can't be easy. I'd not met Jeff before, but I had read his book *Sasquatch: Legend Meets Science* and found it the best of the bunch for scientific analysis of the evidence. "He does bring more scientific rigor to this question than anyone else in the past, and he does do state-of-the-art footprint analysis," said David R. Begun, a paleoanthropologist at the University of Toronto, quoted in *Scientific American* (December 1, 2007). As an expert on primate foot morphology, locomotion, and pathology, Meldrum is uniquely qualified to judge the likelihood that tracks are faked or possibly genuine, and he concludes that some are authentic.

Peter, Jeff, and I met for breakfast the morning after our talks. Meldrum told us about his intention to describe Bigfoot as an ichnospecies, which is a category of taxonomic description applied to "species known only from trace fossils, such as footprints, coprolites, or nests" (*Wiktionary*). And indeed he did: "Ichnotaxonomy of giant hominoid tracks in North America," *New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science Bulletin 42*, was the first Bigfoot paper to be published in a peer-reviewed mainstream journal. It's an important piece, and it includes a very useful discussion of the Patterson-Gimlin film, since the footprint casts on which he based his description came from that site and event. He named his fossil animal *Anthropoidipes ameriborealis*, corresponding with his late colleague Grover Krantz's unaccepted contemporary species, *Gigantopithecus canadensis*. To me, this paper and its underpinnings are impressive, as is Meldrum's overall work and good nature in the face of a generally dismissive academy.

**5.** The Emergence of Robert Gimlin. Bob Gimlin was Roger Patterson's partner on the horseback expedition into Hoopa Country that led to the encounter preserved in the famous Patterson-Gimlin film—still undebunked, and the most significant piece of photographic evidence for Bigfoot. Made on October 20, 1967, at Bluff Creek, in the Six Rivers National Forest, California, the Patterson-Gimlin film has left an indelible image in the mind of almost everyone who knows anything about Bigfoot, and most who don't (see page 254 and cover). The aftermath is murky, but Gimlin didn't come out very well, either financially or in reputation. Patterson took the film on the road and more or less cut Gimlin out, apologizing only on his way-early deathbed. Gimlin was taunted and harassed, damned as crazy if he said he believed or as a faker if he said he didn't. So he went underground, vis-à-vis Bigfoot, for nearly forty years, living a

quiet if vigorous cowboy’s life.

But a few years ago, maybe sensing things had changed, Bob came out again, and has been lionized ever since. I met him first at a gathering outside Naches, Washington, in his own territory. Bob was much honored by everyone present, and I felt honored to meet him. Now past eighty-five, he is still lean and handsome in his cowboy hat, bandana, and silver Fu Manchu. I mention him here because, in getting to know him a little, sitting around a campfire with him and Peter Byrne and their acolytes, hearing his unaffected voice and watching his bright rider’s eyes, I cannot believe that he was lying. He could no more have taken part in faking the famous film (even if anyone could figure out how it could have been faked, which they can’t) than to mistreat his horse. Which he could not do.

**6.** Further analyses of the Patterson-Gimlin film. There have been several of these, conducted in sophisticated media laboratories. They all agree within a narrow range on the mathematics, kinetics, and dynamics of the film and the subject it depicts, including the superhuman stride length of some seven feet. As an advisory board member of Peter Byrne’s well-funded Bigfoot Research Project, which had U.S. Forest Service cooperation in seeking nonlethal DNA samples, I was able to view the latest and best computer recovery of visual data from a first-generation copy of the film (the whereabouts of the original strip remain a mystery). The fluid movement of the muscles in the thigh, the heft of the breast, and other traits were stunning. In these days of CMG, it will be very difficult to make a case for the authenticity of any fresh photographic evidence. But given the technology of the times, that 16mm motion picture camera rented from a drugstore, Patterson-Gimlin remains for now the Teflon clue in the case.

**7.** The many more tracks. A few years ago Peter Byrne and I were crawling through a willow thicket together on our bellies, looking for a favorite Bowie knife of his that he'd lost there on an earlier reconnaissance. Later, over a beer in his local, he told me about a set of tracks that had appeared on a northern Oregon beach nearby. He'd seen the prints just before the incoming tide washed them away. We never found the knife, but I was impressed by Peter's report.

A year later, from east of there in the Cascades, word came of a long line of tracks seen by several good observers along a mountain shoreline. In all, more than a hundred tracks were present on the muddy shore and lakebed of Cottage Grove Reservoir near London, Oregon. Many of these were cast by Cliff Barackman and his associates. You can read about them and see photos at Cliffbarackman.com.

The many physical evidences of possible Bigfeet, of which these were just two examples examined by two of the most respected researchers, just keep on appearing. They have always been difficult to ignore or dismiss out of hand, and they are only getting more so. Whether Sasquatch or not, something is making all these tracks upon the land.

So these are a few of the highlights on the Sasquatch Scene that have helped keep me tuned in. Certainly a great deal more has gone on in Bigfoot World since this book first appeared. There have been many more books published, notably Jeff Meldrum's, wildlife biologist John Bindernagel's *The Discovery of the Sasquatch*, and three more great reads by Peter Byrne: *The Monster Trilogy Guidebook*, *The Hunts for Bigfoot*, and *Yeti*. The bleak landscape of Bigfoot-based fiction has been brilliantly lit up by esteemed author Molly Gloss and her novel *Wild Life*, by far the best conceived and written narrative of what life among such creatures might be like. Molly has managed in this period novel not only to evoke the fin de siècle Lower Columbia and create a powerful woman character, but also to imagine and tell the very likely life of a Bigfoot family in a richer, more plausible way than anyone else ever has. (Molly and I were privileged to travel around the region, sponsored by the Oregon State Library, giving joint readings from our two Bigfoot books.)

And of course there has been the great success of Animal Planet's popular television series *Finding Bigfoot*, starring four actual investigators of the phenomenon ranging from dedicated obsessive to skeptical biologist. My friend Cliff Barackman, a science teacher as well as a serious and eminently sensible Sasquatch field researcher, keeps the wilder side of the show on the level. Detractors love to point at the antics and arguments of Cliff's colleagues, Bobo, Matt, and Ranae, as mere showmanship; but they watch too. Meanwhile, the show has entertained a large and growing audience and encouraged many aspirants in the process of, so far, not finding Bigfoot.

But it's that "not finding" part that's the rub. As time goes on, it gets harder to make the case with the big galoot in absentia. Meanwhile, on the other side, there have been results from scientists analyzing purported evidence that has not panned out. At the same meeting where I met Bob Gimlin and heard Jeff Meldrum's ichnospecies paper, I was excited to hear retired Navy code breaker Scott Nelson announce that he had discovered phonemes (units of speech) in the well-known *Sierra Sounds* recordings by Ron Morehead and Al Berry. But since then, more qualified linguists have convincingly criticized Nelson's methods and conclusions. A much-ballyhooed DNA study and paper known as The Ketchum

Project concluded that Bigfoot is an ape-human hybrid species. This work and report, by Texas veterinarian Melba Ketchum, was discussed at length and found to have many disqualifying problems by Sharon Hill in the *Skeptical Inquirer* (spring 2013). Then the prestigious journal *Science* announced the results of the Oxford University analysis of mitochondrial DNA in thirty solicited "Bigfoot" hair samples (Sarah C. P. Williams, July 1, 2014). All thirty turned out to be identifiable as known beasts—human, horse, cow, deer, bear, wolf or dog, raccoon, and porcupine. And nothing has come from the god-knows-how-many Ziplocs of putative Bigfoot poop adorning freezers all over the Northwest. So, no help yet from all the hanks o' hair and steaming heaps hauled home by the hopeful. Still, Bigfooters can no longer complain quite so loudly that scientists never take a close look at the evidence. These scientists did just that, and they encourage enthusiasts to keep trying.

In the years after the book, the Forest Service persisted with a plan to overlay the high ridges of the Dark Divide with motorcycle thoroughfares. Through a successful lawsuit by the Washington Trails Association and trench resistance by Susan Saul, Karl Forsgaard, and others, that was avoided, but the compromise WTA proposed for a dirt-bike loop outside the wild core failed too. Now there is no money for either plan, and the status quo pertains: ongoing trail degradation from motorcycles. On a backpacking trip of the Washington Native Plant Society, led by consummate field botanist Jim Riley, Thea and I watched Kawasakis tearing up red mountain heather and delicate shooting stars at the edge of a snowfield blocking the trail.

As for the forest, as long as the Clinton Forest Plan and Roadless Rule maintain, the remaining old growth seems safe. But who knows, under Trump? The long-term solution for both threats, logging and motors, would be establishment of a Dark Divide Wilderness area, and this objective has settled deeply in my heart. But tragically, the opportunity was not taken during Democratic administrations and the reign of Congressman Brian Baird. And now, Washington's Third District has been so firmly gerrymandered for the Republicans that we may not see a wilderness-friendly legislator in that House seat for decades. This is the main reason I hope for a Big Discovery in the Dark Divide: to furnish incontrovertible persuasion for wilderness protection of the animal's habitat. Thus far, however, definitive proof is doing a good job of hide-and-seek. I found my own hopes running a little thinner. But then there was this.

On the whole, I have avoided most Bigfoot revels and congresses. Some invitationals concentrate on biology and hard questions. But such conclaves are

likely to be populated by oedipal votaries, PTSD reversionaries, and orb-viewing visionaries. (With all affection for the individual involved, my favorite "Bigfoot-as-Orb" devotee admitted that his videos of vibrating orbs had to be taken out of focus to work. They brought to mind how I like to turn Mexican monarchs into dancing doubloons in the sky by unfocusing my binoculars. His "orbs" were mosquitoes illuminated by his camp lantern.) But I have enjoyed a few gatherings, such as a fun little chamber of commerce caper called Bigfoot Bash, held in Home Valley on the Columbia River east of Carson, featuring a valley-wide scavenger hunt and Bigfoot burgers. I'd give a talk, peddle some books, earn a few bucks, and then get to camp with old Bigfoot pals (though, truth to tell, that's where I met the orb-weaver).

Leaving the Bigfoot Bash on August 29, 2010, I was reluctant to drive home on busy Highway 14 and I-5. So I headed up through the hills instead, to Forest Road 25. The afternoon had grown cloudy and cool after hot and sunny in the gorge, with just a couple of sun-glints. I hit Elk Pass at four p.m.; it was forty-five degrees. I climbed out and worked my way around the borrow pit and its surrounds, and I placed an apple on a rock. Five minutes later, looking down from above, I saw it was gone. Raven? The only tracks around were elk and my own. Back in my car, heading south, I noticed Forest Road 2551, just south of Elk Pass, which I had never before investigated.

Two-tenths of a mile along the road I came to a steep pumice slope, and there I beheld a line of tracks along and across the angle of repose—or rather, two sets of tracks. Ten feet up on the shaly slope, running left to right, there were left footprints, shadowed by shuffles right below. The front half of the first track was crisp, the big toe poking through the crust, a suggestion of the other toes, and a strong pressure ridge in the middle, as the owner rocked back on the foot. These tracks ran all along the slope, then onto moss and rock, and on into forest. Above them, a disconformity in the silt texture showed a system of ground squirrel holes, at least a dozen of them arrayed along and above the trackway. There were marks as of indented balls of the feet, and right above them, what appeared to be plunge-holes of hands at some of the burrows—the marks together suggesting a pounce. (Small-mammal hunting is frequently attributed to Tselatiks by Native Americans around the Cascade volcanoes.) The sharpest of the tracks measured the same size as those I'd found twenty years before, and the one again nine years after that with the film crew: about sixteen inches long, six and a half across the instep, and three and change across the heel. *But*, this time, there were also much smaller tracks, running below and in parallel with the

big ones: eight to ten inches long, two to three inches wide, with a twelve-to eighteen-inch step. Was this the spoor of a parent with young? Was there teaching going on?

A broken old big fir nearby was all torn up for grubs, just like the one I showed the film crew in 1999. These tracks, suggestive of adult and immature, eleven years later, were less than half a mile from there, and from the borrow pit of the midnight whistles in 1990. And they were all of a size, plus the half-pints this time. I had to admit to the possibility of the same creature having occupied this area and left its tracks for me to see three times over twenty years, and now, having reproduced, teaching its offspring to hunt ground squirrels and grubs. That would certainly be one interpretation, and I could not see a better, simpler, more parsimonious one for what I saw. As I drove home that night, twenty years after Thea and I had found those first Elk Pass tracks, I felt the seams of my brain stretching, as my mind opened even wider.

——

The last time I came down out of the Dark Divide was just yesterday. I had been to the Cispus Center, up where the whole thing began, for my annual "Butterflies & Bigfoot" talk to the sixth graders of the Rainier (Oregon) School District's Outdoor School. We look at casts and models and talk about how an unnamed primate might not be any weirder than a caterpillar morphing into a butterfly. They are full of good, smart questions and surprising knowledge and a zillion stories from logger uncles and fisherman dads. We listen to the *Sierra Sounds* (which they love), and I read them the climax of "Something in the Night" with the lights off. They all look over their shoulders as they walk from the campfire back to their cabins in the dark.

This time, as I was leaving for the long drive home after pancakes the next morning, I stopped into the Cispus Center office to say hello to old friends. Sue, the office manager, called up a Facebook posting by her son-in-law, Tim, on her computer. And there they were: more tracks, a nice line of them, toes well defined. Eighteen inches, well impressed into the leafy pumice sand. I later talked with Tim. He'd come across them while hunting the late buck season last November, a few miles east of Mossyrock beyond Riffe Lake. There was a big tree break right above them, and they ran maybe fifty feet down to a logging road. Tim told me he's seen similar tracks near Cispus, just a couple of miles

from where I watched his video, less than ten miles from Elk Pass. He said, “There’s all kinds of things out there in the woods, if you just look.”

Judging from all I’ve heard over the first twenty years of this book’s life, the Dark Divide isn’t the only place where Bigfoot walks, by a long shot. But if it walks anywhere, it walks here.

MAP OF THE DARK DIVIDE

䷽

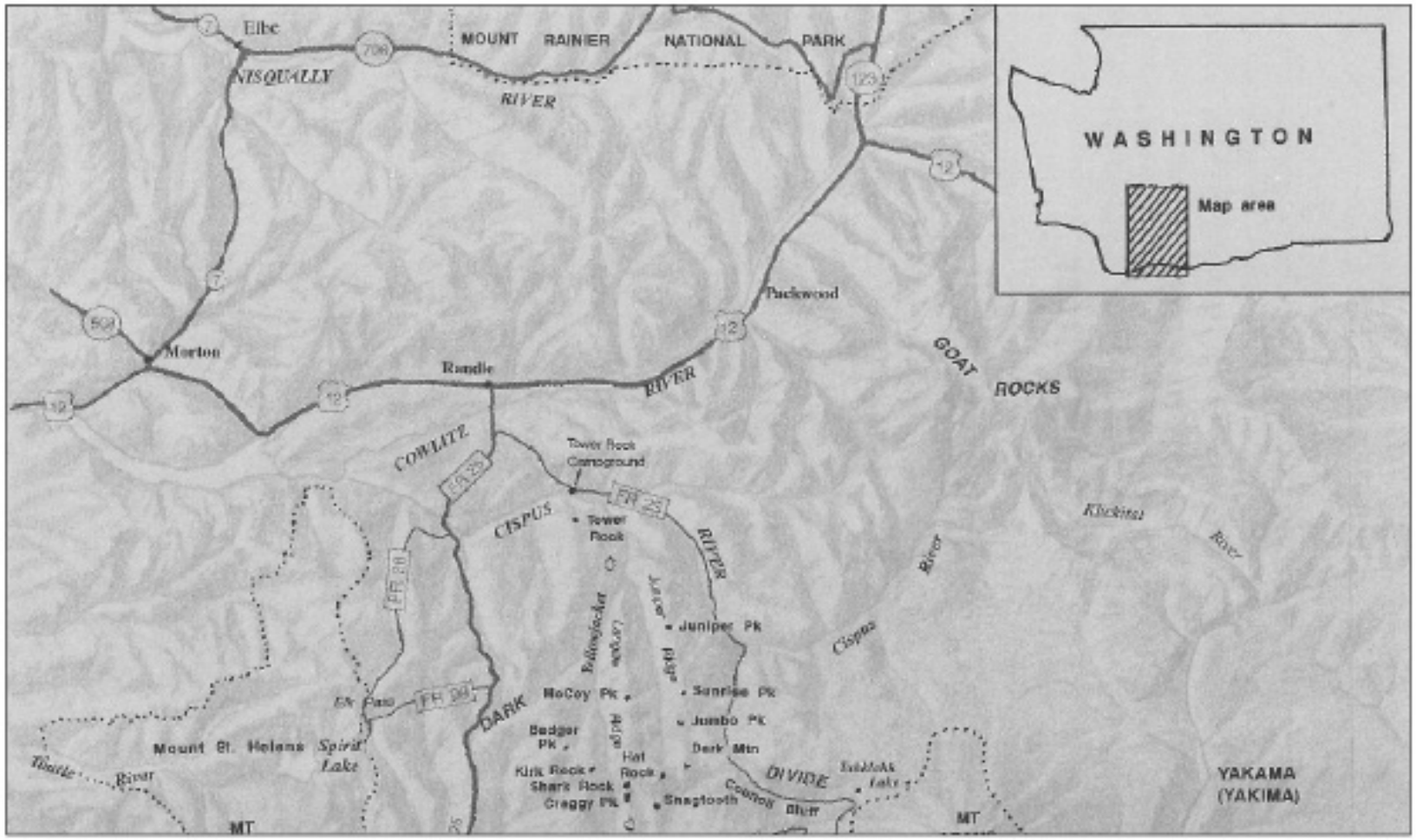
APPENDIX: A PROTOCOL FOR ENCOUNTER

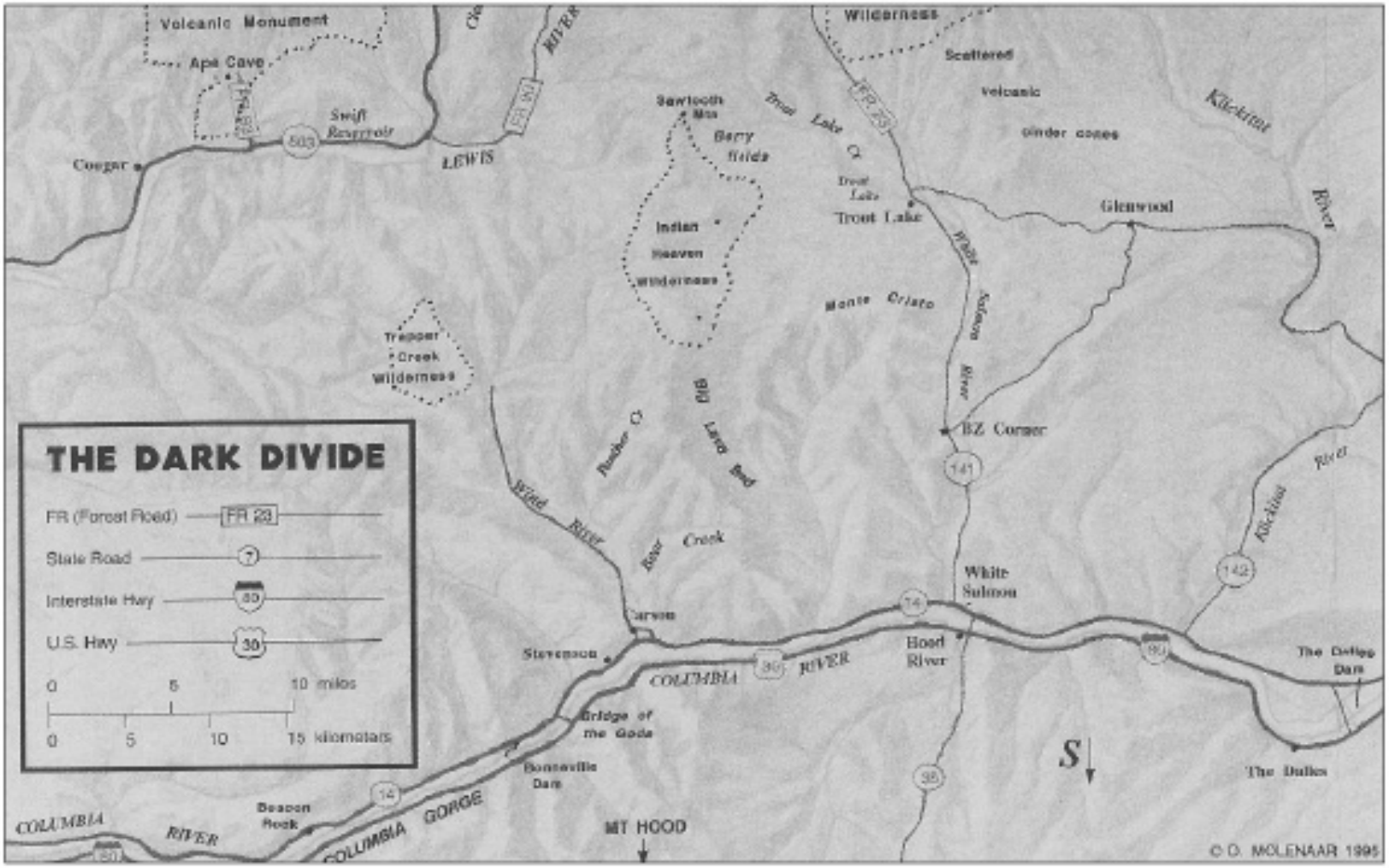
䷽

REFERENCES

䷽

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS


Elbe
MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK
NISQUALLY RIVER
WASHINGTON
Map area
Packwood
Morton
Randle
COWLITZ RIVER
GOAT ROCKS
Tower Rock Campground
CISPUS RIVER
Tower Rock
FR 25
FR 90
FR 99
Juniper Pk
Sunrise Pk
McCoy Pk
Jumbo Pk
Dark Mtn
Badger Pk
Hat Rock
Kirk Rock
Shark Rock
Craggy Pk
Snagtooth
DARK DIVIDE
Mount St. Helens
Spirit Lake
Elk Pass
Tieton River
Klickitat River
Cispus River
YAKAMA (YAKIMA)
MT


THE DARK DIVIDE
FR (Forest Road) FR 23
State Road 7
Interstate Hwy 84
U.S. Hwy 30
0 5 10 miles
0 5 10 15 kilometers
Volcanic Monument
Ape Cave
Swift Reservoir
503
Cougar
LEWIS
RIVER
FR 90
Sawtooth Mtn
Berry fields
Trout Lake Cr.
FR 23
Wilderness
Scattered
volcanic
cinder cones
Klickitat
River
Glenwood
Trout Lake
Indian Heaven Wilderness
Monte Cristo
White Salmon River
Trapper Creek Wilderness
Rattler Cr.
Big Lava Bed
BZ Corner
141
Wind River
Bear Creek
White Salmon
142
14
Carson
Stevenson
COLUMBIA RIVER
30
Hood River
84
The Dalles Dam
Bridge of the Gods
Bonneville Dam
S
The Dalles
Beacon Rock
COLUMBIA GORGE
MT HOOD
© D. MOLENAAR 1995

# APPENDIX

# A Protocol for Encounter

*That we do not know*

*is your perfection*
*and our hope. The darkness*
*keeps us near you.*
—Wendell Berry, “To the Unseeable Animal”

I favor broad, if provisional, acceptance of Grover Krantz’s description of *Gigantopithecus canadensis* based on the tracks and casts he has examined, followed by the preventive listing of this species under the Endangered Species Act. Then the penalties for killing a Bigfoot would have to be harsh enough to prevent a killer from recouping the fine through media rights and sideshow or museum sales. If not manslaughter, the crime should at least be an imprisonable felony.

I do not propose using the species designation to dramatically disrupt the forest-planning process without better ecological information. Rather, serious research efforts should be launched by federal, tribal, state, provincial, and private groups and coordinated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its Canadian and Indian Nation counterparts to determine the likely range of the species and its ecological requirements. Then, if logging must adapt to a new protection priority in the woods, let the chips fall. Such a change won’t be easy, but the results of overharvesting for all these years aren’t easy either. Bigfoot could drive the change toward better use of logged-off private and federal lands at a time when the electronic revolution is supposedly reducing the need for pulp. Thus Bigfoot’s listing, if temporarily a nuisance because it causes us to look much more closely at how the forest works and what it needs to keep on working, could help create an eventually stable logging industry. And if the animal is never found, little harm will have been done by these measures.

And what if it is found? I have long favored the adoption of a protocol for first contact with Bigfoot or with any other outlandish life form. Such a plan could be adapted for extraterrestrial aliens, dinosaurs in the Congo, or plesiosaurs in Loch Ness and Lake Champlain, as well as for the five or so unproven manlike primates. Each of these categories, and others of seeming unlikelihood, has their serious-minded champions—people with both oars in the water.

Roy P. Mackal, a former University of Chicago biologist who went to West Africa to track a putative dinosaur, told *Audubon* writer Peter Steinhart, “We are far from the bottom of the barrel. We may penetrate all the areas on Earth and establish that there are no more large species. But we are a long way from that now.” Rory Nugent followed Mackal to the shores of Lake Télé and came back

to write *Drums Along the Congo: On the Trail of Mokele-Mbembe, the Last Living Dinosaur*. Nugent never saw the animal, but a local witch doctor, thumping his chest, told him "Mokole-Mbembe is in here, and out there in the forest. He is a great spirit, so he is everywhere." While this certainly doesn't prove the physical existence of the dinosaur, it hardly proves otherwise. As George Zug, Smithsonian herpetologist, told Steinhart, "There *are* unknown things."

One of the most eminent biologists ever to give his serious attention to cryptids was G. Evelyn Hutchinson, the Yale ecologist whose theory of the *n*-dimensional hyperspace in the 1920s spawned the popular concept of the ecological niche. As his 1959 *Herald Tribune* review of Bernard Heuvelmans's *On the Track of Unknown Animals* stated, "Many long and slimy beasts from forests, swamps, and the depths of rivers must be essentially nightmares, whose true home is the unexplained terrain of the unconscious mind. Yet some of these beasts may be lurking in forests or mountain valleys waiting to disturb our complacency."

But the actuality of the phenomena need not be at issue. Statistically there is a good chance of eventually finding more creatures like the coelacanth, the mountain gorilla, the Komodo dragon, and they might be far weirder than any of the above. Should we not have a plan in place for the event? If we don't, we might as well ask Hollywood to script the news release in advance, for we know the ending.

So how to avoid that ending? We might start with the International Society for Cryptozoology (ISC), which was founded in 1982 as a forum and clearinghouse for questions and information concerning unknown animals. Perhaps ISC could coordinate a working group of concerned scientists and others to write such a master plan. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) should be involved, along with the wildlife and conservation authorities of each affected governmental district. In the case of Bigfoot, IUCN's Primate Specialist Group, the International Primate Protection League, learned societies of primatologists and anthropologists, the Bigfoot Research Project, BFRO, and similar organizations and institutions should be invited to contribute.

It would be neither possible nor desirable to exclude the local, state, and tribal police, the sheriff's departments, and perhaps the FBI from the plan. None of these should be in command, however. The Bigfoot "situation manager" should be appointed by a council of the Smithsonian Institution, the American Museum of Natural History, USFWS, and Nature Canada. He or she should have full

authority to direct the response, after the fashion of a fire boss on a forest fire, within the context of an agreed-upon procedure, which would include neither killing nor dangerously confining the subject.

In order to give credit for prior involvement and to ensure maximum cooperation for verification and follow-up, a first-call list should be drafted of major Bigfoot researchers who have agreed to participate without remuneration and without arms. Thus, if they agree and are willing to cooperate with one another, a roster of currently active Bigfoot investigators should be notified simultaneously and invited to convene.

All signatory agencies and individuals would agree to abide by a set of behavioral prescriptions. When a scenario occurred such as the one that begins Chapter 18, the sheriff would telephone a coordinator who would activate the communications grid. The principals would travel to the site as soon as possible. In the meantime the sheriff's main job would be to maintain public calm and to protect the animal or corpse. The military should sign the protocol but remain uninvolved unless riot conditions required the National Guard to maintain safety.

For the scene to unfold as peacefully as possible, agreements would have to be made in advance at the highest levels of security and intelligence. This would be especially important for contact with aliens (as so many films have shown), but to some extent it would also hold for Bigfoot. Therefore the protocol should be signed by the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and a cabinet-level representative of the president and the Canadian prime minister.

But what *should* happen and what will are two different things. I don't think such a protocol has much of a chance of being created until it is too late to prevent a tragedy, because most of the relevant officials agree with the scientist who told *Washington* magazine: "It's as pointless a pursuit scientifically as the man in the moon." Only the commissioners of Washington's Skamania and Whatcom counties, to my knowledge, have had the foresight (some say good humor) to pass protective ordinances for Bigfoot in advance of definite proof.

And even if a plan were in place, everyone having put his or her neck out to sign it at risk of derision, would it be followed? Or would human nature, driven by fear and base motives, lead to a dead or wounded creature after all? Even if the plan worked splendidly, I can't say what should or would happen next. Without an ironclad promise to release any captive creature within a specified time, the temptation to keep the animal (and the danger of confiscation by authorities above the treaty) might frustrate the intention of peaceful encounter.

Nevertheless, I feel we should try to devise a civilized and intelligent

procedure to protect our unwilling quarry. For in the end, how much better for all concerned if we could hear the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson above the soundtracks of the monster movies we all *grew up with*: Hast thou named all the birds without a gun; Loved the wood-rose and left it on its stalk; Unarmed faced danger with a heart of trust; And loved so well a high behavior in man or maid, That thou from speech refrained,

*Nobility more nobly to repay?—*

*O be my friend and teach me to be thine.*

# References

I have made no attempt to systematically survey or summarize the large Bigfoot literature, though I have drawn from it freely and widely. The following titles are some that I found particularly engaging, worthwhile, helpful, or otherwise meritorious. They will lead you to many sources of further information.

# BOOKS


Bindernagel, John A. *The Discovery of the Sasquatch*. Courtney, B.C.: Beachcomber Books, 2010.

———. *North America's Great Ape: The Sasquatch*. Courtney, B.C.: Beachcomber Books, 1998.

Byrne, Peter. *The Hunt for Bigfoot*. Woods, OR: Amazon Publishing, 2015. (www.peterbyrne.com) ———. *The Monster Trilogy Guidebook*. Surrey, B.C., and Blaine, WA: Hancock House, 2013.

———. *The Search for Bigfoot: Monster, Myth, or Man?* New York: Pocket Books, 1976.

———. *The Hunt for the Yeti*. Woods, OR: Amazon Publishing, 2015. (www.peterbyrne.com) Coleman, Loren. *Tom Slick and the Search for Yeti*. London: Faber and Faber, 1989.

Cronin, Edward W., Jr. *The Arun: A Natural History of the World's Deepest Valley*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979.

Gardner, John. *Grendel*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.

Gloss, Molly. *Wild Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Gordon, David George. *Field Guide to the Sasquatch*. Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 1992.

Green, John. *Bigfoot: On the Track of the Sasquatch*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1973.

———. *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us*. Surrey, B.C., and Blaine, WA: Hancock House, 2006.

Halpin, Marjorie, and Michael M. Ames, eds. *Manlike Monsters on Trial: Early Records and Modern Evidence*. (Proceedings of the conference "Sasquatch and Similar Phenomena," University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, 1978). Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980.

Heuvelmans, Bernard. *On the Track of Unknown Animals*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1959.

Hunter, Don, with René Dahinden. *Sasquatch/Bigfoot: The Search for North*

*America's Incredible Creature*. Buffalo, NY: Firefly Books, 1993.
Krantz, Grover S. *Big Footprints: A Scientific Inquiry into the Reality of Sasquatch*. Boulder, CO: Johnson Books, 1992.
———. *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*. Surrey, B.C., and Blaine, WA: Hancock House, 2008.
Mackal, Roy P. *The Monsters of Loch Ness*. Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 1980.
Meldrum, Jeff. *Sasquatch: Legend Meets Science*. New York: Forge Books, 2006.
Murphy, Christopher L. *Know the Sasquatch/Bigfoot*. Surrey, B.C., and Blaine, WA: Hancock House, 2010.
Napier, John. *Bigfoot: The Yeti and Sasquatch in Myth and Reality*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1973.
Patterson, Roger. *Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?* Yakima, WA: Franklin Press, 1966.
Perez, Danny. *Big Footnotes: A Comprehensive Bibliography Concerning Bigfoot, the Abominable Snowmen and Related Beings*. Norwalk, CA: D. Perez Publishing, 1988.
Powell, Thom. *The Locals: A Contemporary Investigation into the Bigfoot/Sasquatch Phenomenon*. Surrey, B.C., and Blaine, WA: Hancock House, 2003.
Sanderson, Ivan T. *Abominable Snowmen: Legend Come to Life*. New York: Jove/HBJ, 1977.
Shackley, Myra. *Still Living? Yeti, Sasquatch and the Neanderthal Enigma*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986.

# FOR YOUNG READERS

Baumann, Elwood D. *Bigfoot: America's Abominable Snowman*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1975.
Brockenbrough, Martha, and Cliff Barackman. *Finding Bigfoot: Everything You Need to Know*. New York: Discovery Communications, 2013.
Douglas, William O. *Exploring the Himalaya*. Eau Claire, WI: E. M. Hale, 1958.
Halls, Kelly Milner. *In Search of Sasquatch*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011.
Lachenmeyer, Nathaniel, and Vicki Bradley. *Searching for Sasquatch*. Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2007.
Place, Martin T. *Bigfoot All Over the Country*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1978.

Soule, Gardner. *Trail of the Abominable Snowman*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966.

# OTHER RESOURCES

The World Wide Web is rich in Bigfoot information, misinformation, experience, imagination, and opinion. This takes tolerance, persistence, discrimination, and a truckload of salt to navigate. Two of the best, smartest, and most reliable entry points are these: Cliff Barackman Bigfoot Research: cliffbarackman.com.

Bigfoot Lunch Club: www.bigfootlunchclub.com. (especially good for links to many more sites).

The following two sites will keep you up-to-date on conservation threats and opportunities, trails, wilderness, and other aspects of the Dark Divide, the GPNF, and across Bigfoot Country: Cascade Forest Conservancy (formerly the Gifford Pinchot Task Force): cascadeforest.org.

Washington Trails Association: www.wta.org.

# Acknowledgments

This book grew directly out of a Fellowship to Assist Research and Artistic Creation from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. I wish to thank the foundation and its officers profoundly, as well as my referees: Willard R. Espy, Sue Hubbell, David Rains Wallace, and Ann H. Zwinger. My writers' group—Jenelle Varila, Lorne Wirkkala, Pat Thomas, John Indermark, Diane Matthews, and Susan Holway—gave treasured responses to many drafts. The Bigfoot Research Project and its staff—Peter Byrne, Tod Deery, and Deborah Wolman—extended enormous courtesies, as did Grover Krantz. Dee Molenaar kindly made the map, and the Wilderness Society's Pacific Northwest Regional Office provided the Dark Divide diagram. I am humbly and deeply grateful to Alan Hall and the Haisla Nation for sharing Billy Hall's story, to the Hoopa and Klickitat people for their hospitality, and to all First Americans who generously gave of their rich tradition and experience.

About a billion people and institutions assisted me, of whom the following are a few. Those whom I have forgotten to name or whose material I did not use directly can be sure that their contributions are deeply embedded in the text. Thank you to JoAnne Heron, Fayette Krause, Laura Smith, Ed and Cathy Maxwell, Ann Musché and Alan Richards, Jim Fielder, Susan Saul, Bob Pearson, Carl Forsgaard, Keith McCoy, Stuart and Mildred Chapin, Mary Schlick, Marlene Simla, Fostine Lone Tree, Sally Dole, Patti Fawn, Don Smith (Lelooska), Martha Dementieff, Gerald Amos, Ken Margolis, Arthur Dye, Spencer Beebe, David Campiche, Bill Holm, Tony Angell, Jeanne Gammell, Robert Dirig, David Wagner, Harriet Reinhard, Barbara Deutsch, John and Florence Hinchliff, Sally Hughes, David Shaw, Howard W. Pyle, Jim and Leona Elder, Jane Elder Wulff, Bill Crary, Harry Cody, Josh Haney, Alan Cossitt, Kevin Landacre, Howard Bulick, Joel Freeman and Debby Schaefer, Martin and Lusette Witter, the Dorsch family (Glenn, Dotty, Ian, Libby, and Hilary), Jack Gladstone, John Sparrow, Steve and Kristi Nebel, Richard Cook, Dean and Caroline Wood, David Branch, Monty West, Edgar Wymans, Paul Dorpat, Arthur Kruckeberg, Peter Matthiessen, Pattiann Rogers, Chris Merrill, Ron Carlson, Jane Hirschfield, Scott Sanders, David Quammen, Peter Steinhart, Gary Nabhan, Dick Nelson, David Guterson, Kim Stafford, Edwin Wirkala, Mathew Tekulsky, Gary Cummisk, Brian Doyle, René Dahinden, John Green, Ray and Theata Crowe, Ray Wallace, Danny Perez, Cliff Crook, Steve Harvey, Sally Newberry, Bonnie West, Fred Bradshaw, Jim Hewkin, Larry Lund, Richard

Lyttle, Al Hodgson, Mary Roberts, Jimmy Jackson, Stephen Suagee, William Saxe Wihr, Henry Franzoni, Captain Gutz-Balls, Mojo Nixon, Karölis Bagdonas, Datus Perry, Lillian Dillingham, Bill Lawrence, Mary Stough, Jim Anderson, George Earley, David Gordon, David Burhson, Orin Bridges, Bob Walls, Richard Wiggin, Ken Clark, Andre Stepankowsky, Cat Warren, James Halfpenny, Kent and Irene Martin, Carolyn and Don Maddux, Susan Bahkov, Jerry Powell, Pam Pratt, Susan and Ted Kafer, Jean Anderson and Ugo Pezzi, Jan and Ray Chu, Ron Wahl, Ron Cisar, Sheri Sykes, Dede Killeen, Su Rolle, Paul Sullivan, David Somdalen, Emily Hiestand, Chris Simons, Nonie and Grant Sharpe, Pauline Larson, Brian Larson, Hilary Richrod, Eleanor Robinson, Jay Windish, Chuck Williams, Mel Hansen, David Stone, Bob LiaBraaten, Libby Mills and Rusty Kuntze, Marc Hudson and Helen Munde, and Rainy Knight.

Special debts are due to the archivists and librarians of the Timberland Regional Library System, Longview Public Library, Astoria Public Library, Washington State Library, and the Weyerhaeuser Company Archives; the Cispus Environmental Learning Center, the Skamania County *Pioneer*, the Skamania County Prosecutor's Office, the Yakama Nation, the dedicated professionals of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, and the good people of all the towns around the Dark Divide; Powell's Books, Carson Hot Springs, the Whitecap Brew Pub, and the Logs Tavern.

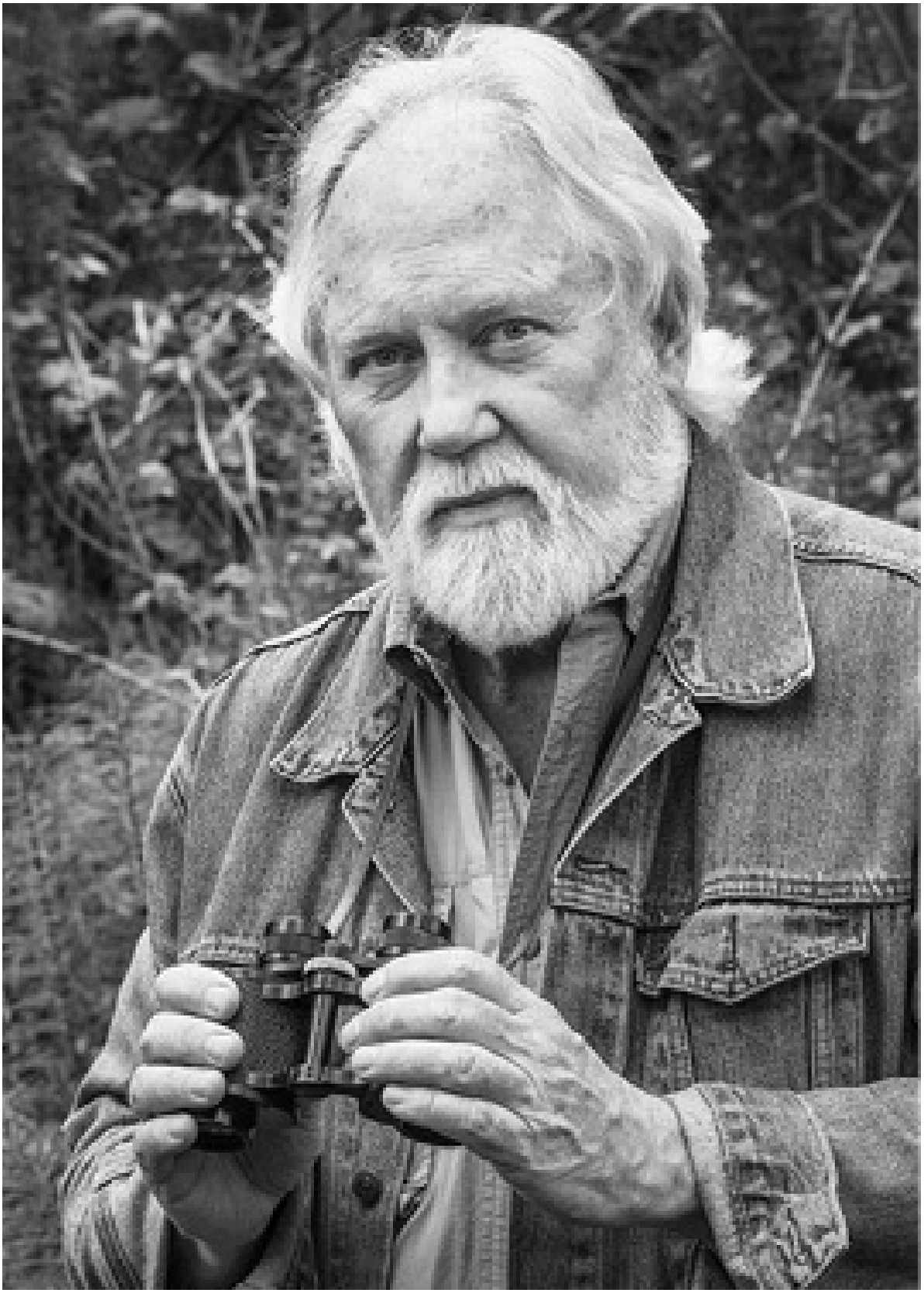
My warmest thanks flow to my agent, Jenny McDonald, and the people at Houghton Mifflin who made the book (and made it better), including Peg Anderson, Michaela Sullivan, Susanna Ralli, Melodie Wertelet, Mab Gray, and, especially, my longtime and much admired editor, Harry Foster.

As always, Thea Linnaea Pyle and Bilak Bokis deserve the best of my love and appreciation.

For the 2017 edition, further thanks are due to more recent Bigfoot friends and teachers including Cliff Barackman, Jane Goodall, Jeff Meldrum, Bob Gimlin, Todd Neiss, Guy Edwards, Joe Beelart, and Thom Powell. For giving new life to this book, I thank my agent, Laura Blake Peterson, filmmaker Tom Putnam, Kurando Mitsutake and the Tokyo film crew, Jeff Baker, Molly Gloss, Shari Bosler, and all the good people at Counterpoint Press including Jack Shoemaker, Harry Kirchner, Jenny Alton, Jennifer Kovitz, Megan Fishmann, Kelli Trapnell, Wah-Ming Chang, Barrett Briske, Irene Barnard, Domini Dragoone, and Charles Brock at Faceout Studio. Thanks to David Lee Myers for the author's photo and his longtime friendship. And I warmly thank Neil Johannsen, David Branch, Bo Diddly, and especially Florence Sage for their steadfast support and ever-loving

encouragement.

ROBERT MICHAEL PYLE is the author of twenty books, including *Wintergreen* (John Burroughs Medal), *Sky Time in Gray's River* (National Outdoor Book Award), *Chasing Monarchs* (Washington Book Award), and *Through a Green Lens: Fifty Years of Writing for Nature*, as well as two collections of poems. A Yale-trained ecologist, Guggenheim Fellow, and Honorary Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society, he lives in rural southwest Washington.



© David Lee Myers